

# InterPark

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Balancing  
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and returns

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Philippines





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## Living through an extraordinary time

Andrew Mellor **Editor**

WHAT a different world we find ourselves in at the moment and how different all our lives have become in just a few months.

As we move into the time of year when amusement and theme parks would normally have now opened for the new season and would be debuting a vast array of new attractions and facilities for guests, such activity remains on hold. In most places venues remain closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and although we are seeing a few parks reopening in some Asian countries, at the time of writing (mid-May) the majority are set to stay closed for some time to come.

The word "unprecedented" has been used constantly to describe the current situation so I am reluctant to use it again here, but it's the best word to describe the circumstances we are in. Who could have imagined a situation where parks and other entertainment venues remain closed for such a long period of time when they should be entertaining millions of happy, smiling, laughing guests enjoying a great day out? Absolutely no-one! The leisure and attractions industry will clearly be hit hard and inevitably some businesses will not survive, so I think it could be a very different industry we see for quite a while once all this is over, which won't be any time soon by the looks of things.

Parks and FECs are built and operated on the basis of having a certain number of guests through their doors each year so not being able to open for much of the first part of the season, if at all this year, is going to negatively impact many operators very hard indeed. And when opening does come around, restrictions on daily visitor numbers will inevitably have to be put in place so it's going to be a season the likes of which we have never witnessed before.

Some attraction venues will suffer more than others, with indoor locations being among these. How, for instance, will children's play centres cope with social distancing? On the face of it, it will be an impossible task as by their very design such venues encourage children to mix and play together, while constant close contact with other guests is also part and parcel of play venues.

Operators will also be required to train their staff in new ways of working to ensure they keep themselves and their visitors safe. A range of new procedures will be necessary and this again will be a challenging task. No-one will have previously had to devise and implement such strict sanitation and distancing rules and although much of this will be common sense, getting used to such new ways of working, instilling the importance of the new rules in staff and guests and maintaining them will be a massive challenge for everyone.

There is no doubt that the 2020 season will go down as unique and "unprecedented" (sorry!) when we look back at it in years to come. It will be a game changer for many operators but hopefully when this extraordinary time is over (whenever that might be) people will appreciate even more what our industry has to offer and return in their droves to visit our parks and attractions once again.

Stay safe!

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## Calendar

### August 3–5

2020 Asia Amusement & Attractions Expo (AAA), China Import and Export Fair Complex (Area A), Guangzhou, CHINA  
Contact: Tina Chang, Guangdong Grandeur International Exhibition Group  
Tel: +86 20 2210 6418  
Fax: +86 20 8257 9220  
Email: sales@grandeurhk.com  
www.aaaexpos.com

### September 9–11

GTI GUANGZHOU 2020, Area A, China Import and Export Fair Pahou Complex, Guangzhou, CHINA  
Contact: Haw Ji Co., Ltd/Game Time International  
Tel: +86 20 8126 9851  
Email: gametime@taiwanslot.com.tw  
http://www.gtiexpo.com.tw/cncht/index.php

### September 22–24

IAAPA Expo Europe 2020, ExCel Exhibition Centre, London, UK  
Contact: IAAPA, 9205 Southpark Centre Loop, Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32819, USA  
Tel: +43 2216 2915 / +1 321 319 7600  
Email: ExhibitSales@IAAPA.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos/euro-attractions-show/home

### October 7–8

WWA Show 2020, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA  
Contact: WWA, 8826 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 310, Overland Park, KS 66212, USA  
Tel: +1 913 599 0300  
Email: patty@waterparks.org  
www.waterparks.org

### October 17–19

CAE Shanghai 2020, Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre, Shanghai, CHINA  
Contact: Lily Zhang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022  
Email: lily@leisureandattractions.com  
www.leisureandattractions.com

### October 28–30

RAAPA Expo Autumn 2020, Pavilion 75, VDNH, Moscow RUSSIA  
Contact: RAAPA  
Tel: +7 495 234 5204  
Email: raapa@raapa.ru  
www.raapa.ru

### November 11–12

Family Attraction Expo 2020, NEC Birmingham, UK  
Contact: 4 Colston Ave., Bristol, BS1 2NT, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)117 930 4927  
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

### November 17–19

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE  
Contact: Reed MIDEM 27 Quai Alphonse Le Gallo, CS 10026 Boulogne, FRANCE  
Tel: +33 179 719 515  
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com  
www.mapic.com

### November 17–20

IAAPA Expo, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA  
Contact: IAAPA, 9205 Southpark Centre Loop, Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32819, USA  
Tel: +1 321 319 7600  
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

## 2021

### January 12–14

EAG/VAE 2021, ExCel London Exhibition Centre, London, UK  
Contact: Swan Events Ltd., Office 7 Bennet's, Leyton Road, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 4AY, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1582 767254  
Email: karencooke@swanevents.co.uk  
www.eagexpo.com

**This year's IAAPA Expo is due to take place from November 17 to 20 at the Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA**

### February 1–3

Saudi Entertainment & Amusement Expo, Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA  
Contact: DMG Events  
Tel: +9 6612 697 0287  
Email: marketing@saudientertainmentandamusement.com  
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

### February 4–6

Atrax '21. 9th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition, Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY  
Contact: Tureks International Fairs Co.  
Tel: +90 212 570 63 05  
Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr  
www.tureksfuar.com.tr

### February 24–26

8th Events & Amusement Expo Tokyo, Makuhari Messe, Tokyo, Japan  
Contact: Reed Exhibitions Japan Ltd.  
Tel: +813 3349 8510  
Email: eventexpo.eng@reedexpo.co.jp  
www.eventexpo.jp/en-gb.html

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## Disney Parks debuts Droid Depot app

TO celebrate May 4 – otherwise known as Star Wars Day – Disney Parks debuted its new Droid Depot app.

The app is designed to bring the magic of Droid Depot at Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge into the homes of *Star Wars* fans everywhere. Users will be able to interact with droids at home. The app enables fans to build their own droids, enjoy virtual experiences and create a digital astromech companion.

Through the interactive app, users can customise their droids by name, programme the droids, see their profiles, and put them on virtual tours around their own home, while manoeuvring through the app.

*Star Wars* enthusiasts can even choose their favourite galactic songs by DJR3X and programme their droid to dance to their melodies of their top space songs.

The app is free to download on the Google Play and App store for a limited time.



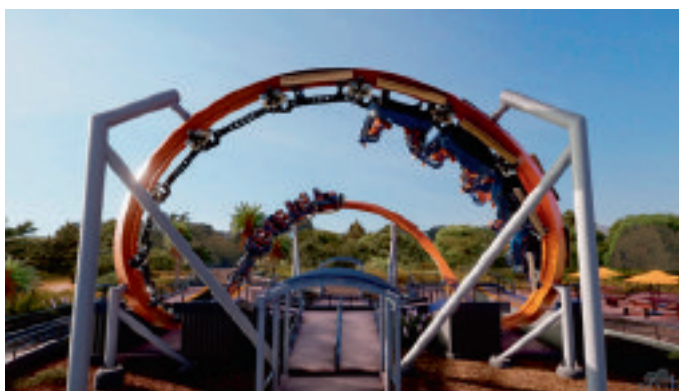
## Ride Entertainment provides cleaning solutions for rides and attractions

AS theme parks and attraction sites around the world prepare to ramp up cleaning and maintenance efforts to reopen safely, Ride Entertainments is offering two services to help – Skycoaster and attraction maintenance.

Skycoaster provides cleaning solutions for flight suites. As Lance Beatty, Skycoaster's managing director explains: "As our industry faces an unprecedented chain of events, Skycoaster remains open and committed to supporting our customers as you navigate these challenges times."

"We want to especially thank High Energy Sports for their tireless effort to find solutions regarding the sanitisation of our flight suits and establishing a procedure to help guide you during operations. We wish everyone a safe and healthy season and hope to be flying soon."

Ride Entertainment also offers installation and maintenance services, designed to supplement parks' maintenance teams or project manage and complete projects so that the required maintenance of rides are completed on time.



## Zamperla introduces AR remote assistance for attractions industry

ZAMPERLA has launched the first augmented reality remote assistance service in the attraction rides industry.

Integrating augmented (AR), mixed (MR) and virtual reality (VR), the service provides an innovative solution that improves capabilities during what is a period of unprecedented social difficulty. The AR/MR/VR technology can be used by various users on different types of devices.

With real-time manipulation functions, which combine AR, MR and VR, the quality of work is improved. The advanced remote assistance system also reduces margin of error, raises safety standards and reduces the time to complete tasks, thereby heightening efficiency and productivity.

Users can share real-time content, through both virtual and multimedia channels. Using advanced tools, content can be interacted with so users can keep a track of completed tasks, which can potentially be manipulated with graphics, overlay texts and multimedia.

Roberto Dal Pozzolo, customer service director at Zamperla, described how the new AR remote assistance technology will assist ride manufacturers in the current difficult COVID-19 climate, saying: "The idea of starting a remote assistance service with AR system, mixed and virtual was born initially in October 2019, as a project to support Zamperla's technicians on the road. The COVID-19 emergency, travel restrictions and the obligation of social distancing have led us to rethink the system as a guide device for the customer, for the assembly of Zamperla's attractions."

"The service has been available since mid-April and, since then, we have carried out two testing experiences – the first one with a WindstarZ, installed in the Mandarin Plaza mall in Kyiv, Ukraine, and the second with a Jump Around, at Jaderpark, Germany, providing remote assistance not only for the assembly of the attraction, but also for the testing of the machine."

"We have reinvented ourselves, changing the original goal of the service and adapting it to our needs in order to start a business that will allow us to create a real-time service system combined with the sale," Dal Pozzolo added.

## BoldMove launches Smash & Reload attraction

BOLDMOVE, Belgium-based providers of independent support to theme parks and leisure centres, has launched its first thrill ride. Known as 'Smash & Reload', the ride is hyper compact and high capacity, and is part of the new Rogue Rides range.

Rogue Rides combines innovative technologies with a creative concept and easy but dynamic gameplay, designed to provide guests with an immersive experience. The game is designed for all ages, providing family entertainment with a team building element, where up to five teams can battle simultaneously.



## NEWS IN BRIEF



## Holovis develops free social distancing app to help theme parks reopen safely

HOLOVIS, specialists in creating immersive and mixed reality to engage audiences, has developed a social distancing app. The Crowd Solo app is designed to help themed entertainment venues reopen safely following closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The app features a reservation and queue management system with real-time alerts. The purpose of the app is to ensure venues avoid crowd hotspots by providing operators with instant insights into the movement of guests.

Crowd Zero is powered by Holovis DeepSmarts data analytics engine, which visualises the movement of guests. With tracking capability, guests are made aware of social distance metrics from other visitors. Guests are alerted when they get too close to other visitors via audible and vibration feedback.

The app will be free to all single ticket destinations, including theme parks, museums, cultural centres and zoos.

Holovis is looking to feedback from the industry to support further development of the app. As Peter Cliff, creative director at Holovis, says: "We are committed to helping the industry that we love get back on its feet as quickly and as safely as possible. It looks likely that the need for some form of safe crowd management will be around for the foreseeable future meaning attractions and entertainment venues will have to adapt and learn to operate differently in order to give guests peace of mind and confidence to re-visit."

**US** Bob Chapek, Walt Disney Company's new CEO, has been elected to the company's board of directors. Chapek was made CEO in February 2020, replacing longstanding CEO Bob Iger. He was the former chairman of Disney Parks, Experiences and Products. Iger remains in the role of executive chairman until December 31, 2020, when his contract ends. He currently oversees the Disney board of directors, which now has 10 members, and continues to provide "guidance" during Bob Chapek's transition into the position of CEO.

**EUROPE** Gulliver's Valley theme park, which is set to debut this summer in Yorkshire, is to feature a new indoor attraction dedicated to the much-loved Chuckle Brothers. In line with the comedy duo's famous catchphrase "to me to you," a Chuckle Bank will be located at the end of Chuckle Street where visitors can make donations of toys and books for local charities and community initiatives. A Generation Gallery will also be a focal point of Chuckle Street, where visitors can submit any photographs they have of themselves with the entertainers.

**CHINA** The Wenchang Lake Investment Promotion Bureau of Zibo City, Shandong Province, China, has announced it is to invest in the development of a theme park and commercial complex. The investment is valued at CNY2.25 billion (approx. US\$0.32 billion). The project will involve the development of the Zibo Wenchang Lake Tourism Resort, which will include a theme park and the Wenchang Lake commercial complex project.

**US** The San Diego Tourism Authority has released an Attractions Re-Opening Plan for theme parks and attraction sites located in California, including SeaWorld San Diego, Legoland California and more. The reopening plan is designed to enable attraction sites to reopen in stage three instead of stage four. Stage three is expected to be several months away, while stage four states a park cannot reopen until a coronavirus treatment becomes available.



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## Launch of Tornado Springs at Paultons Park postponed to 2021

PAULTONS Park theme park in Hampshire, UK, has announced that the launch of its new themed land Tornado Springs will be postponed until Easter 2021.

The new area was due to launch on May 19 this year. However, due to unprecedented challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown, the opening has been put on hold until next year.

Tornado Springs is designed in an American style, based on a fictional town in 1950s Midwest USA. The land boasts more than seven new rides and attractions and will be Paulton Park's fifth themed area.

Commenting on the postponement, Richard Mancey, managing director of Paultons Park, said: "The decision to delay the opening of Tornado Springs to 2021 has been very difficult to make, particularly as so many of our guests have been eagerly looking forward to enjoying the new rides and attractions.

"We know how disappointing this postponement will be, to both our guests and our staff. After 18 months of hard work it is very hard to accept that the attraction will not open this year, particularly when it is so close to completion. However, with no work taking place on site at present (at the time of writing) and with no clear idea of when the specialist contractors from several European countries will be able to recommence work, we felt that this was our only option."



## Toverland announces safety precautions when park reopens

TOVERLAND theme park in Sevenum, the Netherlands, has announced a series of safety measures being planned for when it reopens following closure due to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to director Jean Gelissen, among other actions the park is considering limiting its visitor numbers. "We are thinking about working with time slots. We will have to spread. People who don't know each other will probably no longer be able to coexist," said Gelissen.

As *InterPark* went to press, Toverland announced that it would be reopening on May 19, with a number of safety measures in place and following a protocol named A Safe Day Out Together, drawn up by the Netherlands parks association Club van Elf and the Dutch Zoo Federation.

Meanwhile, Bellewaerde theme park in Belgium is planning to put similar measures in place when it reopens, including capping the number of visitors to the park initially to 4,000. With fewer guests, people will be able to spread out more and keep a safer distance from each other.

Bellewaerde is also going to place distance markers around the park where people form queues to help maintain social distancing, bring in additional cleaning routines and ensure staff wear masks.



## Tivoli Copenhagen extends summer season to October 4

TIVOLI Gardens amusement park in Copenhagen is to extend its summer season until October 4 as the park's opening date is delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking in early April, Lars Liebst, Tivoli Gardens' CEO, commented: "Like the rest of the world, we are day by day monitoring the COVID-19 crisis and the significance of the pandemic for the safety of our guests and employees. In this context we have now decided to postpone the opening until 1 May (this has now been put back until June 8). On the other hand, we extend the summer season to 4 October.

"I can hardly bear it, because we have trimmed the amusement park ready to welcome thousands of guests here in April. We hope that Tivoli and others in the amusement industry are among the first to give back to the Danes some of the togetherness they have missed during the crisis. We are ready to open the doors at very short notice."

## Merlin Entertainments provides entertainment to families staying at home

MERLIN Entertainments is continuing to connect and stay in touch with families despite parks remaining closed and guests having to stay at home during lockdown.

The Making Magic with Merlin initiative involves bringing Merlin Magic to homes everywhere. By partnering with the online educational publishing house Twinkl, Merlin Entertainments is able to share content from Sea Life centres with families. Twinkl created a free Home Learning Hub that gives daily lessons to three to 16-year-olds in Britain.

The teaching experiences include behind-the-scenes looks at Sea Life attractions presented by Sea Life centres' aquarium experts. The Twinkl and Sea Life remote sessions began on May 1.





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## Compagnie des Alpes

### Compagnie des Alpes explores impact of COVID-19 on group's business

COMPAGNIE des Alpes, the ski resort and leisure park operator in France, has issued a report on the impact of COVID-19 on its group business.

Like all French ski operators, Compagnie des Alpes closed all its ski resorts on March 14, 2020, well ahead of the expected closure date of May 8. The early closure means the Compagnie des Alpes Group estimates its sales for the ski season to be approximately 20 per cent lower than the 2019 season.

Unlike ski resorts, of course, the season for leisure parks only starts to get underway at the beginning of April. As a result of the pandemic, Compagnie des Alpes closed all its venues that were already open at that time and halted the opening of its other parks.

The decision to reopen resorts will be made on a case-by-case basis and will depend on advice and orders from health officials and the government. The group noted how sales for its leisure parks from mid-March to the end of June in 2018–19 were approximately €120m.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the group is suspending the 2019–2020 EBITDA guidance for both its core business sectors, which the company had distributed to the markets when its annual results were released in December 2019.

### Butterfly coaster arrives at Elevenpark, Budapest

A NEW coaster has been installed at the Elevenpark family entertainment centre in Budapest, Hungary. Known as the Butterfly, the ride can reach speeds of 40km/h and forces up to 2G.

The Butterfly is designed and manufactured by Sunkid, specialists in the manufacture of rides and attractions for theme parks and other amusement sites.

Elevenpark is Hungary's largest indoor playground, spanning an area of over 3,500sq.m. The park offers fun for families with children aged two to 12-years-old and attracts around 150,000 visitors a year.

Stefan Fritsch, Elevenpark's CEO, commented that the new attraction was easy to install, simple to operate and has been a big hit with the park's guests. "Our goal is not only to remain the number one indoor play park in Hungary, but also to actively support children in their motor development," he said.



### RWS Entertainment Group launches London HQ

RWS Entertainment Group, the award-winning production and live experience and entertainment company, has announced the opening of its new European headquarters in Monument, London.

RWS was founded in 2003 in New York by CEO Ryan Stana. The company produces immersive experiences and live shows across all platforms within the leisure and attractions industry, as well as the hospitality, municipality, theatrical and corporate sectors.

RWS boasts an impressive portfolio of clients, including Madame Tussauds, Guinness World Records, Nickelodeon, Europa-Park and Resort and Hershey's Chocolate World, to name just a few.

With new headquarters in London, RWS plans to bring another level of experience to the EMEA market by working alongside its European clients and partners with greater ease and precision.

Commenting on the move into London, Stana said: "The launch of our European headquarters in the UK's creative capital is significant for us and is symbolic of our growing commitment to serving the EMEA market with a new level of custom experiences."

### BPB offers virtual versions of ICON coaster



BLACKPOOL Pleasure Beach (BPB) in the UK is offering immersive video experiences of its popular ICON roller coaster.

Coaster fans have been able to enjoy the thrill of the 1.4km ride from their own home at specific virtual showings of the coaster. From early April, fans could take a virtual ride on the ICON, which was the first double launch coaster in the UK.

The virtual experience was the first of a series of immersive videos to be offered by the park as it remained shut due to the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, each Saturday, BPB is showing exclusive footage of its most iconic and popular rides on its social media channels.

As well as experiencing virtual rides, Pleasure Beach fans can also take part in fun activities and exercises that the world famous park is sharing on social media. There will also be keep fit videos with Team Nick, alongside art and craft sessions.



Venetian Carousels



Dark Rides



Bumper Cars



Major Rides



## MENA attractions industry heavily impacted by COVID-19

THE leisure and attractions industry across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), an average of US\$6.71 billion per month in business has been lost in the industry in the region. WTTC estimates put \$80 billion of the \$102 billion generated by people visiting MENA from overseas in leisure tourism, including visits to theme parks and entertainment centres.

Of the region's gross domestic product, 8.7 per cent is made up by the travel and tourism industry. The WTTC states that theme parks and FECs contribute to MENA's GDP above all other segments of tourism, with families spending more on entrance fees, food and drink and hotels compared to any other type of tourism.

Restrictions are starting to be lifted in the region, with shopping malls, the location of many FECs, beginning to reopen. Strict safety measures are, however, in place, including temperature checks on visitors at the entrance to venues and the mandatory wearing of face masks.



## DEAL show postponed until 2021

THE 2020 edition of the Dubai Entertainment Amusement & Leisure (DEAL) exhibition has been postponed until 2021.

The exhibition was originally planned for March 2020 but was postponed until mid-June. The show's organisers, International Expo Consults (IEC), have confirmed that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the event will now be put back a year to 2021.

In a statement about the announcement, IEC said: "After thorough evaluation of the current global COVID-19 situation and the prevailing travel restrictions, we have decided to postpone the DEAL show to 2021. In the current global pandemic backdrop, the safety of all of our exhibitors, partners, visitors, staff and associated stakeholders will continue to be our top priority.

"Furthermore, the Dubai World Trade Centre (the venue) is now temporarily converted into a field hospital. Thus, all the major shows, concerts and events across the UAE have also been postponed for the rest of the year. After careful review, in-depth discussion with the Dubai World Trade Centre and the feedback received from exhibitors, partners and associates, we arrived at a difficult decision to postpone the show."

The official date and venue for next year's show has yet to be announced.



## ProSlide teams up with Rawae Co. to power new Saudi Arabia waterpark

PROSLIDE, a leader in the design and manufacture of waterslides and a range of other water based attractions, has teamed up with Rawae Co., a leading waterpark operator in Saudi Arabia, to create a new waterpark opening in the region.

The Jeddah Waterpark will boast a Mediterranean theme and comprise eight of ProSlide's iconic ride attractions, including an all-new RallyRACER and RallyPOINT open flume and a RocketBLAST technology water coaster. The new waterpark will be located a 30-minute drive from the port city of Jeddah.

Phillip Baker, vice-president business development MENA at ProSlide, commented: "We are thrilled to be working with Rawae Co. again to bring their vision of a world-class waterpark to life. This will be the largest park of its kind in Saudi Arabia, spanning over 110,000sq.m, and will be powered by unique, iconic, custom-designed attractions featuring the latest ProSlide innovation and technology."

Construction of the Jeddah Waterpark is already underway, with the site expected to be open to the public in the summer of 2021.



## DXB Entertainments appoints new CFO

DXB Entertainments, the Dubai-headquartered leisure and entertainment company which operates a range of parks and other attractions, has appointed a new chief financial officer (CFO).


The new appointment follows the resignation of John Ireland. During Ireland's tenure, DXB Entertainments enjoyed its first quarter of profitability, in the fourth quarter of 2019. Remi Ishak has replaced Ireland as CFO. He is an experienced financial leader, who worked in a similar role for the asset management company Emirates Real Estate Investment Trust.

Ishak has been involved in the real estate and hospitality industries for more than 15 years, focused on diverse projects, including operational repositioning and management and deal structuring and acquisitions.

Speaking about the appointment, Mohammed Al Mulla, managing director and CEO of DXB Entertainments' parent company, Dubai Parks and Resorts, said: "At DXBE, he will be responsible for the continued implementation of our strategy as well as helping guide us through the currently challenging operating environment."





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## Cedar Fair announces series of cost-cutting measures

CEDAR Fair Entertainment Company has announced it is to make a series of cost-cutting measures in response to the coronavirus crisis.

In March, Cedar Fair closed all its parks. In a drive the cut costs, the company eliminated nearly all seasonal and part-time labour costs.

Part of the cost-cutting measures included the suspension of all advertising and marketing expenses. Cedar Fair also reduced its CEO's salary by 40 per cent. Other company executives have also received 25 per cent cuts to their basic salary. All full-time members of staff at Cedar Point parks have also had their hours reduced by 25 per cent.

Capital spending of the parks has been delayed by at least \$75m on non-essential projects as part of the company's bid to make savings to costs during these challenging and unprecedented times.



## Animax Designs develops PPE to help fight against COVID-19

ANIMAX Designs, a market leader in the creation of animatronic and interactive characters for theme parks and entertainment centres around the world, is now involved in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 with the production of personal protection equipment (PPE).

The Nashville-based company is producing masks and face shields to help protect people working in the medical profession. As the disease escalated within the local Nashville, Tennessee, community, Animax saw an opportunity to utilise its existing manufacturing equipment to develop specialist protective masks and face shields to help protect health workers on the frontline.

Chuck Fawcett, president and CEO of Animax Designs, commented: "I think this initiative fits very well with our purpose. We are in business to bring smiles to faces around the world. When children see those beloved characters literally coming to life in front of their eyes, it transports them into their own fantastical dream world.

"One of my favourite things is to watch the reaction of parents when they see this excitement in their children. Now many of those same parents are stepping up to the plate directly in the face of danger," Fawcett added.



## Dollywood supplies critical items to hospitals and emergency services

DOLLYWOOD has been providing vital items to help the community of Tennessee during the coronavirus pandemic.

The theme park, which is temporarily closed due to the outbreak, has provided the Sevier County Food Ministries with a cheque for more than \$16,000 to help boost the organisation's supplies before it began to face unprecedented demand.

The park's wardrobe and costume shop teams are producing reusable face masks to give to patients, nurses and doctors at East Tennessee Children's Hospital. The wardrobe team created 350 masks in just one day, as the costume shop team produced 250 adult masks and 250 children's masks over just two days. The teams are continuing to make the masks from home.

Dollywood's safety team has also been busy, providing 200 ponchos to the Sevier County Emergency Management Agency, Pigeon Forge Fire Department and the Sevier County Ambulance Service, which have been in desperate need of such protection due to the ongoing medical supply shortage.

## IAAPA pushes for aid from Congress on behalf of attractions industry

IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, is urging for aid to be given to the sector to ensure businesses are ready for recovery and the 700,000 plus employees in the US in the industry are considered in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, which has led to theme park and attraction sites across the world closing indefinitely.

The association has submitted critical policy requests to Congress, seeking critical changes to the CARES Act.

IAAPA president and CEO Hal McEvoy said in a press statement: "The CARES Act is an important step in the right direction to help America successfully emerge from this global crisis. Now, work must be done quickly to ensure critical changes and additional support are earmarked to ensure attractions industry needs are met.

"Parks and attractions remain closed and thousands of employees are either unemployed or indefinitely furloughed. With the start of the traditional summer season growing closer, these businesses need support now to ensure they can reopen when the time is right and continue to support the economies in the communities in which they are located," McEvoy added.

IAAPA is urging Congress to take steps to support the attractions industry through the likes of small business administration loans, emergency stabilisation funds and increasing funding for the Paycheck Protection Programme.



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## Miziker Entertainment to host mentorship weekend in LA

MIZIKER Entertainment, a long-standing creative design company for the themed entertainment industry, is collaborating with the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) to help nurture the next generation of location-based entertainment professionals.

The theme park and special venue veterans are teaching the company's next generation of leaders about technique and business best practices.

The teaching programme will take place during what's known as the MiZ Wknd + SCAD LA 2020. Hosted from the creative theme park hub of Los Angeles, the three-day event will include roundtable sessions with industry leaders, tours of local companies and attractions, a guide trip to Disneyland and portfolio reviews with the Miziker Entertainment team, including the company's chief creative officer, Ryan Miziker.

Charlotte Huggins, Miziker Entertainment's CEO, commented on the aim of the event. "We want to help shepherd young people into our unique and rewarding industry, which is a highly creative field that runs on teamwork.

"The themed entertainment sector will recover; people will return to the parks and the industry will continue to grow and mature around the world. There's a need for artists, illustrators, character developers, writers, costume designers, composers, media producers, technical designers and more. It's an ongoing need and not just in LA and Orlando – we're doing projects around the globe," Huggins added.

Due to the current coronavirus pandemic, the exact dates of the programme have yet to be announced and will depend on the recovery of both the industry and the Los Angeles region.



## Kentucky Kingdom donates disposable ponchos

KENTUCKY Kingdom, the 63-acre amusement park in Louisville, Kentucky, is donating 3,000 disposable rain ponchos to the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM).

The donations are being made to help KYEM assist in the fight against the spread of coronavirus. KYEM, a division of the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs, is providing supplies to support the state's response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Mike Dossett, director of KYEM, expressed his gratitude for the theme park's donations. "It is nice to see businesses like Kentucky Kingdom give back to those who are working to keep the community safe and healthy," he said. "Things like ponchos are invaluable during these unprecedented times and they will be put to great use."



## Universal Orlando CEO announces possible reopening strategies



JOHN Sprouls, CEO of Universal Orlando Resort, has announced a number of ideas centred on the safe reopening of the venue. The suggestions were made during conference calls with the Reopen Florida Task Force group, which was created by Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis.

To make the site as safe as possible for visitors and employees when it reopens, Sprouls said they are considering using social distancing in queues and on rides, as well as limiting the number of guests entering the park.

Universal's waterpark, Volcano Bay, already employs virtual line technology, which could be expanded into the theme parks. Further touchless technology could be utilised at Universal Orlando to help limit physical contact.

Disinfectant and cleaning measures could be increased across the park, along with staggered seating on rides. There is also the possibility that temperature checks could be made on guests prior to them entering the theme parks. Staff may also be asked to wear masks and screening measures.

An official date for the reopening of Universal Orlando has yet to be set.

## Expansion of Hersheypark's ChocolateTown resumes



CONSTRUCTION of Hersheypark's ChocolateTown expansion has resumed, though an opening date for the Hershey, Pennsylvania, park's 2020 season remains unknown.

The \$150m expansion project includes the installation of a number of new attractions. The extended area will be home to Hersheytown's fifteenth roller coaster, Candymonium which promises to be the park's largest and faster coaster.

New facilities are also being added to the park, including restaurants, food vendors and shops, while fountains and the Hersheypark Carousel are being relocated to the new area. Construction of the extension was suspended at the beginning of April due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Garret Gallia of Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Company, commented on the decision to commence building work, saying: "Given the guidance and permission from the Commonwealth, construction on the ChocolateTown project resumed as of May 1. All enhanced health and safety processes and necessary operational protocols set by the Governor, CDC and the construction industry are being carefully followed to ensure the safety of our team members and the contractors on site."





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## India's attraction park industry asks for coronavirus relief

THE Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI) is seeking relief from the damage the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the sector.



All amusement parks in India have been closed since mid-March and even when lockdown is lifted, the sector fears it is unlikely to resume normality as social distancing measures are expected to still be enforced.

IAAPI has asked India's prime minister Narendra Modi

for assistance, including a six month deferment of payment of direct or indirect taxes of all statutory dues, a 12 month moratorium on payments to financial institutions, a reduction in the effective rate of interest on loans and a 12 month complete holiday from paying goods and services tax.

In a press statement, IAAPI secretary general Anil Padwal said: "We earn over 40 per cent of revenues in the March to June season. After the summer vacations, there are rains and a six month long lull every year."

IAAPI has written two letters to the Indian prime minister, the first dated March 23 and a follow-up letter on April 3, stipulating the industry's requests.

## Legacy Entertainment Asian projects earn top honours and awards

LEGACY Entertainment, a leading designer of entertainment projects, has announced that three of its projects in Asia have been recognised by some of the world's top tourism authorities.

One accolade was made in honour of Macau City Studio, which was designed by Legacy Entertainment for Melco Entertainment. The resort is to receive the Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star Award for the third year in a row. Summing up the resort, Forbes said: "The property is a flashy, cinema-themed behemoth with just about any entertainment option you can think of – the luxurious Star Tower hotel, concert venues, a 4D Batman ride, exquisite shopping opportunities, some 30 restaurants, a white-sand beach and pool, a sprawling spa and, believe it or not, a whole lot more."

Additionally, the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual China Best Cultural Tourism Awards saw two Legacy-designed projects pick up awards.

The Legacy-designed Kingdom of Poseidon in the north east city of Harbin took home the "Best Indoor Theme Park" award at the prestigious event. Kingdom of Poseidon features a signature indoor waterpark, as well as an outdoor waterpark zone, an aquarium, retail, dining and an entertainment promenade.

The upcoming, Legacy-designed Chimelong Forest Kingdom was also recognised, being named "Most Anticipated Theme Park." This mega destination, which will include one of the world's largest theme parks when it debuts later this decade in Qingyuan, China, promises to be a next-generation combination of theme park and animal sanctuary.



## Seibuen Amusement Park to undergo 1960s revamp

THE Seibuen Amusement Park in Tokorozawa, Saitama Prefecture, Japan, is to undergo a major revamp, centred on a 1960s townscape.

The transformation of the park is due to be completed in 2021. The Seibu Railway Co. has announced it will spend approximately JPY10 billion (\$93m) on the project. The theme park will continue operating during the renovation work. The project will be assisted by Tsuyoshi Marioka, the company which helped modernise Universal Studios Japan in Osaka.

Seibuen Park opened in 1950 and covers an area of approximately 200,000sq.m. At the height of its popularity, the site attracted 1.94 million visitors in the business year ending 1989. In the year ending March 2019, this figure had dropped to just 490,000.

With many of the facilities falling into disrepair, the theme park seems to be long overdue a makeover. As Takashi Goto, president of Seibu Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Seibu Railway, said: "We want to ensure an increase in the level of satisfaction among visitors."

## Sim Leisure Group reaches new global expansion milestone



SIM Leisure Group, a leading designer of theme and water parks, has reached a new milestone in the international expansion of its ESCAPE brand.

The company has signed an agreement with Sri Lankan-listed Elpitiya Plantations to develop and operate a theme park in Sri Lanka under the ESCAPE brand. The park will be located between Colombo and the city of Galle. The first phase of construction of the site on 30 acres of land will begin in 2020.

The island of Sri Lanka has a huge untapped domestic tourism sector. In 2019, it welcomed 1.91 million international tourists. The opening of a family-friendly theme park is poised to be a successful and welcome addition to Sri Lanka.

Sim Choo Kheng, founder and CEO of Sim Leisure, spoke about the potential of bringing the ESCAPE brand to Sri Lanka. "We see a remarkable opportunity in bringing the ESCAPE brand to Sri Lanka's domestic tourism landscape," said. "Sri Lankans are very eager for a world-class tourist attraction and we are very excited for this chapter in Sim Leisure's regional growth."





China  
Attractions  
Expo

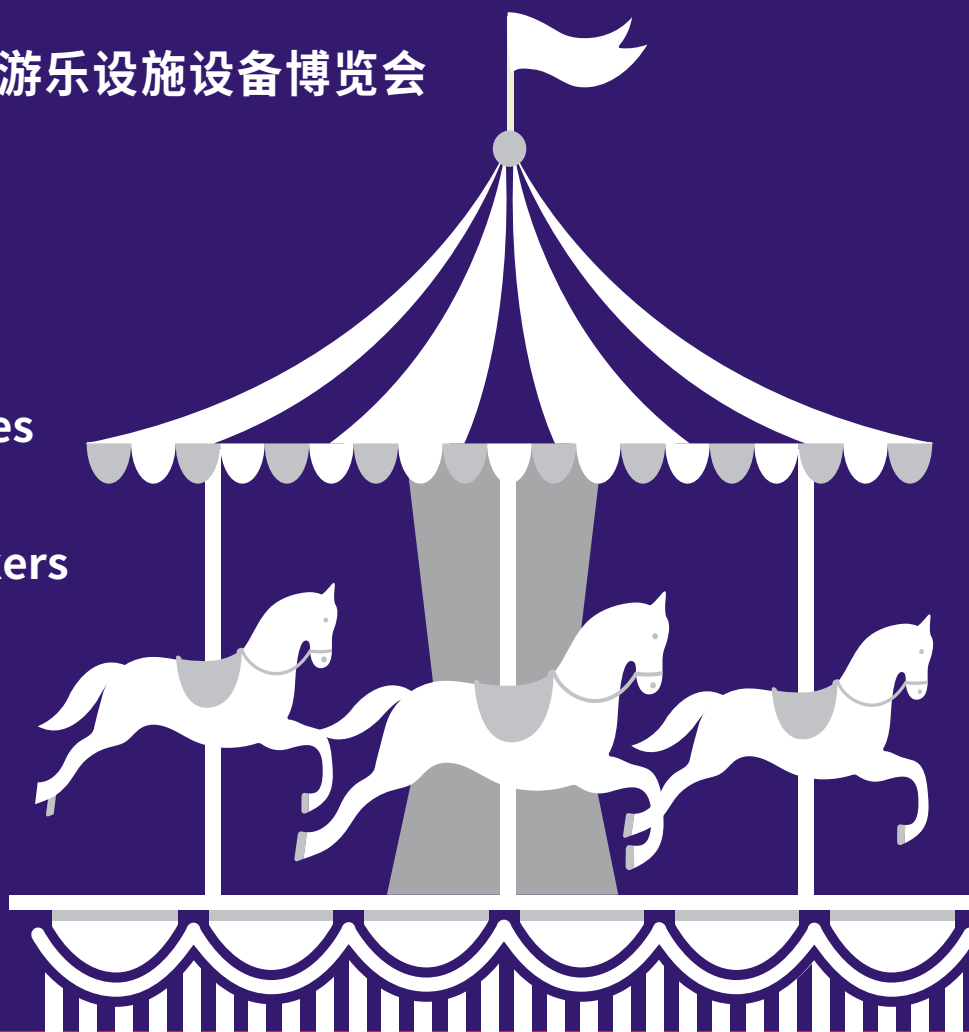


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## Sun Group focuses on developing new attractions during temporary closure

SUN Group, a leading developer of entertainment sites in Vietnam, is working on new attractions during the sustained closure of sites due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Sun Group sites were closed throughout March until further notice. The closures are allowing the company to work on new attractions, which it plans to roll out when the virus is no longer a threat. The new projects will also help revive the tourism industry in Vietnam, which has taken a significant hit in the wake of the pandemic.

The first phase of the Japanese-style Yoko Onsen hot spring resort in Cam Pha is due to open in 2020. A three-wire cable car project is also set to open on Cat Hai Island in the second quarter of 2020. Sun World Danang Wonders is scheduled to open for July to September and is currently undergoing renovations.



## Taiwan parks could restrict access to 50 per cent capacity

TO help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Taiwan could restrict visitor numbers to its amusement parks and attraction sites to 50 per cent of their maximum capacity.

The Ministry of Transportation made the announcement in a drive to prevent dense crowds condensing into tourist sites in the Chinese state.

The announcement came after footage emerged of large crowds gathering at some of the island's major attraction sites over the Tomb Sweeping Holiday in early April. Many people were ignoring the government's calls to wear masks and practice social distancing. Consequently, calls were made for the island's May 1 holiday to be cancelled and for the government to announce it could limit entrance to 25 of Taiwan's most popular attraction sites to 50 per cent of their total capacity.

The same restrictions would be applied to 42 popular scenic spots on the island, with entry and exit points to manage the number of visitors coming in and out of amusement sites and other popular attractions.



## Japan reopens theme parks and attractions

JAPAN is starting to reopen theme parks and other attractions that had been temporarily shut because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

One of the first theme parks to reopen in Japan was the GrinPa Amusement Park, which opened its outdoor attractions on March 9. On March 14, the Moominvalley theme park in Saitama opened under the condition that all guests have their temperature checked on arrival at the resort.

On March 16, the Huis Ten Bosch theme park reopened with certain restrictions and requirements, including only outdoor attractions operating and all visitors being asked to wear masks.

Legoland Japan reopened on March 23 but is limited to several key outdoor attractions and is operating shorter business hours. Staff are wearing masks at the resorts and temperature checks are being carried out.



## Hong Kong Disneyland Resort reports fiscal activity in 2019

HONG Kong Disneyland Resort (HKDL) has revealed its fiscal performance for 2019, reporting strong revenue and profit growth in the first nine months of the year.

Revenue increased by 11 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of 2019. During this period, attendance jumped by five per cent and hotel occupancy grew by eight per cent year-on-year. In the fourth quarter of 2019, Hong Kong's tourism industry witnessed significant drops in visitor numbers, leading to HKDL's fiscal performance being negatively affected.

Due to the impact of the fourth quarter results, the park's full year EBITDA was down 17 per cent to HK\$1.1 billion (approx. US\$0.14 billion). For the year ending September 28, 2019, the resort delivered HK\$6.0 billion (approx. US\$0.77 billion) in revenue. Per capita spending at the park set a new record for the tenth consecutive year, with an increase of four per cent year-on-year.

Despite annual attendance decreasing by four per cent to 6.5 million, HKDL has welcomed over 83 million visitors since the park opened in 2005. Locals have accounted for around 41 per cent of attendance to the park, with mainland China and other markets accounting for 33 per cent and 26 per cent respectively.

In 2019, HKDL underwent a significant expansion with the opening of Ant-Man and the Wasp: Nano Battle!, which soon became one of the resort's most popular attractions.





# ASIA ATTRACTIONS 游乐界

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## China's theme parks begin to reopen with strict health measures in place

SINCE China's fight against coronavirus started to slow down, theme parks and amusement venues across the country have started to open their doors once more.

Many of the theme parks opening to the public have strict measures in place to prevent further outbreaks of the virus. Before being admitted into a park, visitors are required to have their temperature checked and to show their health QR codes and IDs. Reservations must be made in advance and visitors must wear a mask. Certain theme parks have introduced a no cash rule and payments should be made via mobile payment to maintain a non-contact service.

Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park reopened on March 20 but closed again on March 30 because of Shanghai's strict policy to counter the coronavirus. A number of other Haichang Ocean Parks are reopening, including those in Qingdao and Yantai, Shandong province. The parks have stringent real-time monitoring in place to control the number of visitors entering the indoor and outdoor areas of the sites.

Shanghai Happy Valley reopened on March 20. During closure, the theme park carried out various upgrades, including the maintenance and checking of equipment and giving everything a deep clean. Members of staff have also been trained for non-contact service and signs have been placed around the park reminding visitors to keep a distance of at least 1.5m from each other.



## Foliday to fund Sanya Fosun Cultural Tourism City

THE Chinese holiday group known as Foliday has signed a strategic co-operation agreement with the Sanya municipal government. The agreement states that Foliday will inject large capital sums to build the Sanya Fosun Cultural Tourism City.

The destination will feature world-class theme parks, themed hotels, international shopping centres, wellness centres, wealth management centres and more. Shanghai Foliday announced it was to "invest heavily" in the Hainan province several years ago. The company has subsequently introduced a number of well-known international brands to Hainan.

One such brand is the Sanya Atlantis park, which opened in April 2018. In 2019, revenue of the park reached CNY1.31 billion (approx. US\$0.18 billion). The site attracts an annual visitor count of around 5.2 million.



## Forbidden City's live streamed tours attract millions of views

BEIJING'S Palace Museum, known as Forbidden City, has been holding a series of guided tours streamed live.

The attraction closed on January 25, as the outbreak of coronavirus led to closures of businesses across China and the virtual tours have proven very popular, attracting millions of views. As the site remains closed, it is offering remote tours via online streaming to give people who can't visit the museum some light educational entertainment and to help celebrate the museum's 600th anniversary.

On April 5 and 6, three tours of Forbidden City were streamed on a number of platforms, including CCTV News and People's Daily. Reports show that the live-streamed tours, which took different routes around the Palace Museum, attracted millions of views. The Xinhuanet tour attracted around 34 million views.

The tours involved researchers from the museum acting as tour guides and telling stories and secrets about the ancient site. The live streaming tours were the first of their kind for Forbidden City.

## OCT Zhongshan Harbour theme park due to open in 2023

THE OCT Zhongshan Harbour project, the first large-scale cultural and tourism complex of OCT Group in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, China, is expected to open in 2023.

Providing a taste of how the park will look, the OCT Group has released a drawing of the design of the site. The project will feature an adventure park, a wetland park, a science and technology land, a LOFT creative zone, a happy carnival, a gourmet festival and a holiday hotel.

The large-scale cultural and tourism complex will have a total investment of CNY8 billion (approx. US\$1.13billion). It will integrate the local cultures and will be centred on natural landscapes and water resources. The theme park will also have a focus on "future technology," designed to provide unique and novel experiences for visitors.







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# WATERPARKS

## Baha Mar Bay waterpark on course to open in 2021

DESPITE the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent postponement of construction work, the \$300m waterpark and entertainment development at Baha Mar in the Bahamas is on track to be completed in 2021.

Baha Mar Bay has suspended construction, but the developers believe the site is still on schedule to be completed next year. Graeme Davis, president of Baha Mar commented: "We have made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend all operations, including construction on property. As the health, safety and well-being of our associates and Baha Mar guests is of utmost importance, the construction work will resume once it is determined safe by the Ministry of Health to continue. The Baha Mar Bay development is scheduled to be completed in 2021."

The building of the new waterpark will coincide with renovations to the Melia Nassua Beach Resort. Upgrades will be made to the Melia Hotel as well as to the restaurants, meeting spaces, gymnasiums and public areas at the resort.

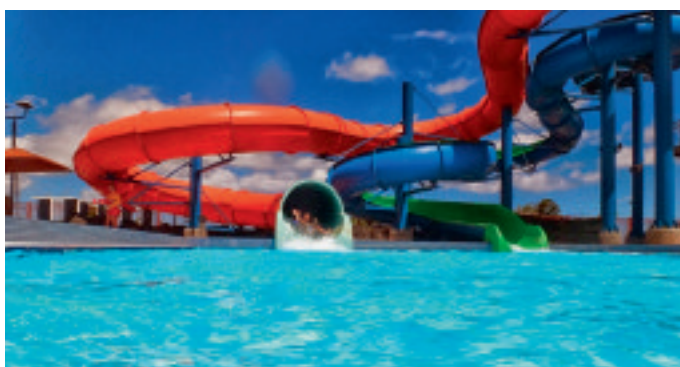


## Park Vega waterpark debuts in Nigeria

THE Park Vega waterpark has debuted in Agbor, Nigeria. The park features a series of waterslides, splash pads and the Wave Pool, which is the largest pool in West Africa and the centrepiece of the waterpark.

The giant wavepool extends to an area of 1,500sq.m and contains around half a million gallons of water. By pneumatically creating waves that reach heights of 1.1m, the wavepool is designed to mimic the waves of the ocean, providing fun in the water for all ages and levels of swimming ability.

The slides at the waterpark are designed for adults and are known as the Space-Hole Slide, the Free-Fall Slide, the Multi-Surf Slide and the Black Hole – Wave Combo Slide. The park is also home to a colourful Aqua Tower and Splash Pad for children, which features more than 50 interactive elements, including a tipping bucket, water wheels, pipe falls, net bridge, umbrella jets and much more.



## SeaWorld announces leadership changes



SEAWORLD has announced changes to its leadership, following the resignation of CEO Sergio Rivera.

Rivera's announcement that he was resigning as CEO was made just days after SeaWorld said 90 per cent of its employees would be furloughed during closures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a company press release, Rivera resigned because of disagreements over the board of directors' involvement in the decision making at SeaWorld.

Marc Swanson has stepped in as interim CEO of SeaWorld and will serve as CEO at least until the parks reopen following their temporary closure because of the pandemic. Swanson was chief financial officer and treasurer at SeaWorld and has worked for the company for nearly 20 years.

Employees at SeaWorld parks were temporarily furloughed without pay from April 1. According to the company officials, staff are eligible to receive unemployment benefits. During the parks' closures, the animals continue to be looked after, company officials said.

## Vantage Pivots to provide contact tracing solutions during coronavirus pandemic



VANTAGE Pivots, providers of innovative technology to the attractions industry, is to use its tracing software to help in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The tech was developed to trace guests visiting waterparks via smart wristbands.

The tracking software enables waterparks to see how guests circulate and which attractions they spend the most time on. The technology thereby provides a waterpark with a snapshot of the number of visitors at a site and where the most popular places within a waterpark are.

Philip Edgell, Vantage's president, described the benefits of the technology, saying: "The value stems from linking wristbands to guest profiles. Each guest of the park is incentivised to create a profile that records any number of details a park wishes to know and that the guest is willing to share."

"The guest receives a more personalised experience and the operator, in turn, receives guest details, while also allowing them to respond to customer behaviours in real-time," Edgell added.

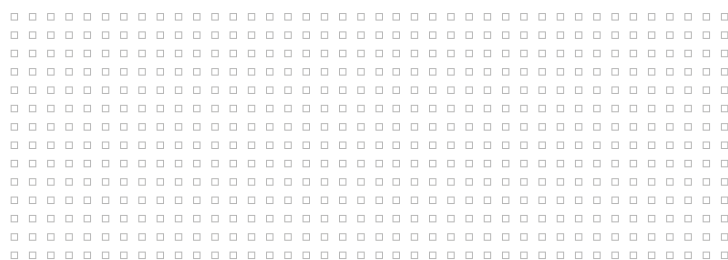
Knowing where visitors are and how long they stay in specific areas could also prove beneficial to businesses other than attraction sites during the current era of social distancing.





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## Polin introduces team-building activity Splash Course

POLIN, a market leader in the design, manufacture and installation of waterparks, waterslides and water play attractions, has introduced an innovative new product known as Splash Course.

The team building activity product features low and high elements and is designed to challenge personal development. These playground areas are suitable for all ages and offer physical, intellectual and psychological challenges to help participants improve problem-solving, hand skills, resilience, competitiveness, learning self-limits, the ability to work under stress and to assume risks, as well as retaining focus, while fostering an environment of co-operation and friendliness.

Splash Courses can be incorporated into a number of indoor and outdoor locations and are ideal for adventure and amusement parks. They feature various levels of height and difficulty, meaning the product is suitable for all ages and ability levels. Polin installed its first Splash Course playground at the Palomaqua waterpark in Antalya, Turkey.



## Holiday World brings fun to homes through digital resources

HOLIDAY World Theme Park and Splashin' Safari Waterpark in Santa Claus, Indiana, US, has created digital resources designed to bring some fun into homes during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The Holidog's Digital FunTown page boasts a series of features, including printable worksheets, interactive videos, magic and cooking videos, Spotify playlists and a Holiday World podcast.

Leah Kock, the resort's owner, said: "As soon as schools started closing, we started hearing from parents who just wanted to bring their kids for the summer already. Since opening day may be farther away than we'd hoped, we decided we needed to bring a little Holiday World into everyone's homes."

Families are encouraged to recreate the rides and attractions at the theme park, as well as inventing new ones, and share their creations on social media with the hashtag #HomemadeHoWo. People over the age of 18 who submit video content with the hashtag could be eligible to win tickets to enter Holiday World this summer.

The resort remains closed until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.



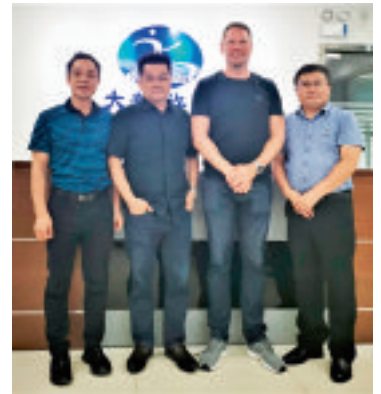
## Sim Leisure moves into China's waterpark market

AS part of its expansion into the Chinese market, waterpark and theme park design and build specialist Sim Leisure has announced it has signed an agreement with China-based Guangzhou Daxin Water Park Equipment Co., one of the biggest waterpark designers and equipment suppliers in China.

The agreement will give Guangzhou Daxin the right to use the Sim Leisure name to secure theme park design and building contracts within China and the ASEAN region. In return, Sim Leisure will receive a five per cent royalty payment to the company's 60 per cent-owned subsidiary, Sim Leisure Creative.

Sim Choo Kheng, founder of Sim Leisure, who has spent years propagating the Sim Leisure name through being involved in more than 100 major waterpark and theme park projects around the world, spoke about what the partnership with Guangzhou Daxin means to him, saying: "I have put in blood, sweat and tears over the decades to build this business to the point of being recognised as the only renowned theme park designer and contractor from Asia."

"I have waited for the right moment to enter China and the ASEAN market. We are ready for the next stage of growth with our new partner Guangzhou Daxin Group, capitalising on our common business philosophy of providing Asian business economics with a global approach in our creativity."



## Brean Splash waterpark expansion plans approved



SEDGEMOOR District Council in Somerset has approved plans to extend Brean Splash waterpark with new rides and changing rooms.

Brean Leisure Park, owners of Brean Splash, sought permission to extend the building of the swimming pool as part of a five-year development plan for the site. The approved proposals include the installation of new rides at the popular waterpark, including a wave rider, which two people can use at the same time, and a high thrill water ride known as the Space Bowl.

Other new attractions include a family friendly multi-slide and a water play area for all ages. There will also be a new outdoor pool which will feature a Wave Ball pool with a beach. Additional changing room facilities will also be built at the site.

The expansion of Brean Splash is expected to create up to 20 new jobs.





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# Miniature golf stays the course!

**Scott Lundmark**, president of Adventure Golf Services in the USA, shares his thoughts on why miniature golf remains an attractive option for operators and how it continues to stay relevant to younger, more demanding attraction guests

"MINIATURE golf has long been a favourite global past time for all ages, as it is all about a family escape with fun. It is an entertaining, challenging game to be played with an equal chance for all players to "win" or get a hole-in-one... not just for the avid golfer.

That said, miniature golf has seen some significant changes and trends over the last five years, such as an increase in private and public capital entering the market, fostering larger family entertainment venues in retail spaces, with more upscale food and beverage offerings on offer alongside the miniature golf. In addition to this, we are seeing a new breed of mini golf with more arcade-like designs, integrating technology and social aspects with video screens, mobile phone apps and so on.

With the target market for miniature golf including everyone from children aged seven-years-old up to

grandparents, this is the chief appeal of the game – a fun and attractive activity for all ages. It is a classic game with a social aspect – playing, talking and laughing with friends and family.

While municipal parks, hotels, resorts, camp sites and other venues often offer miniature golf as an amenity for visitors and guests, it is a very attractive and profitable business across the board, because for many kinds of operators the fact that all ages can play, the activity holds people for longer periods of time thus boosting other revenue centres, retail stores and attractions, and as a passive entertainment miniature golf can provide a "break" from intense physical activities and high-thrill rides and attractions. Miniature golf also has low operating costs and low maintenance and upkeep compared to many other activities. As a business, all of this contributes to a very attractive ROI and cash flow generator.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, which has delayed many projects throughout the world, we were seeing the greatest potential in the UK, Asia and US, as well as at unique entertainment destinations throughout the world. The UK has been a leader in combining miniature golf with restaurants and bars for a while and this is now being seen in other parts of the world as well.



# 亚洲水乐园

## ASIA WATER PARK

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All images courtesy Adventure Golf Services



Then you have entertainment destinations such as those from the Katmandu Group that has a park in Mallorca and another planned in the Dominican Republic, where they find miniature golf provides a balance to other high-tech, simulated rides and activities. As well as this, the cruise industry has introduced miniature golf to customers worldwide and when these customers see the popularity of miniature golf, they attempt to import it into their own geographic market.

In the US, we have seen an increase in requests for indoor and outdoor courses at retail malls and shopping venues, along with spaces where miniature golf is often used to attract and prolong visits. We may also see a surge after the coronavirus pandemic is contained given the availability of private equity money pouring into various projects.

Asia is also big business for the sector due to the enormous population, as are resort locations throughout the world – they are always looking for fun, new attractions.

In terms of the dos and don'ts, when it comes to successful miniature golf, at AGS we utilise a design philosophy of "choice, chance and challenge."

Choice – offering more than one pathway from tee to hole cup provides choices.

Chance – a chance for something to happen – the ball changes direction, triggers a sound or movement with a themed element or the chance for a hole-in-one.

Challenge – the course needs to be challenging for adults and the avid golfer and yet easy enough for young kids to play, enjoy and have an equal chance to beat an adult! This is what most audiences expect from the game.

Besides the above, the course must have a theme with curbside appeal – something visually to attract people and encourage the desire to play.

As for the don'ts, if a miniature golf course is not fun and doesn't attract repeat play, it will not survive. If it is not maintained and upgraded to create new fun, attendance will lag.

Most venues rely on us to create a unique atmosphere or custom character to attract people. From Wild West motifs to modern combat scenes and jungles, at AGS we are constantly researching and helping venues craft their own fun and unique ideas to enhance playability and draw people into a given venue. We are also seeing requests for less-expensive, portable courses, which recently led to the development of the AGS RollOut Mini Golf system. In the past, there were many miniature golf courses built which, in order to remain attractive in the current market, now require renovation.



Themes and concepts for miniature golf run across the board – everything from retro-style themed elements such as the Clown's Mouth, Loop-de-Loop and Sand Castles, to fun, crazy themes with Rube Goldberg style concepts, jungles, combat zones and landscaped/natural-looking courses with water elements. The possibilities are only limited by the imagination.

Five years ago we introduced SplashGolf – the first-of-its-kind interactive wet mini golf that is played on a splash pad. This new concept takes the game itself and the players into an interactive water environment. And it has the unique ability to be dual-purpose by being utilised for a dry golf environment, by either simply turning off the water and putting over a rubber surface, or with a pre-cut putting turf laid on top of the SplashGolf surface. Operators can monetise with splash pad mini golf in the summer months and guests can enjoy the SplashGolf game in cooler months during the spring and autumn seasons.

We feel SplashGolf fills the age-old need in waterparks to balance out both passive and active water attractions and pulls in all age groups from toddlers to older children and seniors. Spray miniature golf is a new activity that can divert and shrink queue lines at other attractions and be used for competitions and tournaments.

Advances in technology have also continued to move the sector forward and ensure it stays relevant to younger guests – such as auto score cards that can display on someone's mobile phone or a video screen, and chips that can be implanted in a ball to relay speed, distance and ball path. The technological additions bring a new level of interaction to the game. As well as this, the AGS lightweight, flexible panel/anchor systems have also opened up a wider array of location venues, such as rooftop applications.

Looking ahead, technologies that will enhance an overall immersive experience (sight, sound, scents) and increase social media sharing of the game will help increase its appeal. However traditional mini golf, integrated with themed elements and water, will never lose its luster and attraction."



# The impact of COVID-19 – the manufacturers' perspective

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the parks and attractions industry, *InterPark* talks to a selection of manufacturers and suppliers about how the current situation is affecting their companies and the projects they are involved in, the actions they are taking to minimise the impact of the pandemic, feedback and concerns from operators, the cancellation of trade shows around the world and more

## **Alberto Zamperla, president and CEO, Antonio Zamperla SpA**

Discussing the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on his company to date and the actions being taken to minimise the affect of the global pandemic on Zamperla's business, company president and CEO Alberto Zamperla told *InterPark*: "The first course of action is preserving the contracts that were under negotiation prior to the pandemic. So far the success rate is positive. We are also increasing connectivity with our clients via phone calls

and social media. Lastly we, as a group, are participating in regional amusement association calls and webinars, including all of IAAPA's, to keep up to date on the market's perspective in reopening parks for the 2020 season."

The obvious concerns from operators, Zamperla continues, revolve around reopening parks and carnivals for the 2020 season and what that is going to look like if they are able to do so. "The preparation for a potential 2020 opening will come with many operational adjustments," he says. "One of the biggest concerns is how social distancing requirements are going to impact attendance and ultimately the bottom line."

He notes no specific concerns being voiced by operators in relation to amusement ride suppliers being able to survive the crisis, but comments that "the notion of companies in all sectors being able to weather this crisis is of concern across the board."

Zamperla is, of course, a participant in all the major trade shows around the world every year and at many other industry events and on the cancellation of many of these Zamperla comments: "It is a very good possibility that most, if not all, industry conventions will be cancelled in 2020. That includes IAAPA Orlando 2020 if you take under consideration that health officials from the CDC and Trump administration are publicly predicting a second wave of the virus in the Fall. In addition, it is a very real possibility that travel restrictions will persist in some form and companies will continue to limit outside entities from visiting their offices for a while.

"In order to address this we are starting a project called Virtual Sales Trip which is a platform in which we will be able to make ride presentations to our clients remotely. The idea is very simple to apply. It will contain a menu of communication platforms for the calls (GoTo meeting, Skype, Zoom, Teams, etc.) and a simple way of sharing presentations and basic information such as video, brochures, etc. This will also be a vehicle to better serve our customers which will include aftersales, tech support and parts.

"We have been in constant contact with our clients and the message during these conversations is simple," Zamperla concluded. "We are thinking of yours and your families' well-being and how you are faring during the crisis? We are here for you."





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### **Giancarlo Bellotti, vice-president sales, C. and S. srl**

"On the financial side a production stop of two months brings all the related problems of cash flow, so we have aimed to secure fresh funds from banks which are benefitting of government measures in this regard," says Giancarlo Bellotti at C. and S. "On the health side we have had to look at how to re-arrange work to provide our workers and employees a high level of safety. We have also had to organise 'smart-work' for those who can work from home and prepare shifts for the shop team for when they'll be allowed to come back at work.

"From the commercial side we have had to find new communication strategies and new media to reach customers in times when travel is practically impossible. Video conference was seldom used by us, but now it's

almost a daily routine. It is here to stay, we believe. So to strengthen digital communication means is another step to be taken.

"So far orders received remain all confirmed, none cancelled, but some were moved back by a few months. Operators do not expect to reopen soon and even if they are allowed to reopen they do not expect the same figure of visitors as last season. Some are more pessimistic and consider the 2020 season wasted, if not totally lost."

Bellotti notes that customer confidence in suppliers remains high, while on the subject of the postponement and/or cancellation of some of the main industry trade shows and other industry events he comments: "It's easy to imagine the increased financial stress imposed on any activity. Delayed deliveries mean late payments and this worsens the cash flow. Fixed costs weren't changed by CV19, incomes were. Nearly two months without any deliveries is a wound which will take time to heal."

And he concludes: "No industrial sector was spared by economic fall-out as a result of the pandemic. Even oil and automotive, once believed among the strongest and most financially solid of businesses, are showing worrying cracks. Right now manufacturers are still able to stay afloat, the truly hard times will arrive in 2021. After a 2020 season cut by half, if not more, and with 2020 exhibitions deleted it will not be easy to win new orders. That shall be the time of the true Darwinian selection."

### **Sohret Pakis, director of marketing and communications, Polin Waterparks**

"We are making every effort to keep our team and our loved ones safe," says Sohret Pakis at Polin Waterparks in Turkey. "To that end, we have set up all necessary technology for as many staff as possible to work from home; every day, they are focused on fulfilling their colleagues' and customer needs, from project management and information technologies to customer service and logistics. Similarly, our sales team is at the ready at any time to brainstorm and discuss details of exciting new projects that come to mind. We have team members on hand, as well, to support the development of budgets, proposals and contract needs of all kinds.

"Within our factory, we have taken every precaution to ensure the health and safety of the dedicated professionals who are responsible for physically creating and delivering

the products customers need. They are focused on fulfilling orders on time and with no interruptions.

"As circumstances continue to change, we will modify all operations necessary to maintain our commitment to our team's safety and health. They are our priority and we are committed to taking care of them, just as we remain dedicated to continuing our decades of service to our customers. We are incredibly grateful to our entire team of dedicated employees who have taken on these challenges with positivity and perseverance."

Pakis notes the postponement of trade shows and conferences around the world, as well as the closure of public spaces where crowds gather, including theme parks, zoos, aquariums, museums and other attractions, and believes the economic impact of the pandemic are expected to be far reaching.

"Attractions across the world have been impacted by the spread of the coronavirus and the bounce back to previous levels may take a couple of years," she states,





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while in a message to industry friends and colleagues she adds: "In this unparalleled time of uncertainty, we know there is one thing on which we can always rely — one another. At Polin, we are staying positive and maintaining a continually optimistic outlook of hope and

strength for our team, for you and for our industry. In our 43 years of business, we have faced many challenges and we've always done so together — and successfully — as members of the Polin family. And, because we understand how our business and your own are inextricably

intertwined, we wanted to send you this note to reassure you of how we are actively addressing and managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our staff and your on-going and current projects.

"First, know what we believe that, together, we can work through and overcome this troubling time. Our thoughts are with everyone who has been affected by this international emergency.

"Just as importantly as fulfilling business commitments, we also simply want to make sure we stay connected with all of you as we face this difficult time together. It will take all of us, working together, supporting one another and caring for all. We remain in this together and we know we will overcome this together. We all belong here. We are all connected. And we complete one another. This is the only way to sustain life just like it is in nature. Stay hopeful! Stay strong! Stay positive! Stay connected!"

## **Rick Hunter, chairman and CEO, ProSlide.**

"The ProSlide Worldwide Team is following all national and international COVID-19 guidelines to stop the spread of the virus," says ProSlide's Rick Hunter when talking to *InterPark* about the current pandemic. "We are all working remotely from our homes and following all social distancing guidelines to help flatten the virus curve, stop the spread of it altogether and hopefully contribute to saving as many lives as possible.

"We've been in close contact with all of our customer partners since day one. Everyone is following governmental guidelines while pushing forward with construction projects and reopening plans. A few projects are paused but the vast majority are moving forward with social distancing and other health and safety precautions. We're committed to supporting our customer partners through this and ProSlide will do everything possible to help them open as soon as possible."

Of any operator concerns for suppliers, Hunter states: "We're very fortunate to have strong, long-term relationships with our customer partners around the world. We know there are uncertainties in the future but we believe strongly in our industry and the power of waterparks. Suppliers and operators are in this together! We're not worrying, we're making adjustments and building strength for the future."

As is the case for all manufacturers and suppliers, trade shows and other industry events are key activities for ProSlide and Hunter emphasised the importance of such events. "Trade shows are really important in our industry. IAAPA, WWA and other organisations connect suppliers and customers in every major market around the world. This situation prevents us from meeting face-to-face, but we're doing everything possible to stay in lockstep with our 'customer partners,' supporting them in all of their planning, scheduling of installations and looking forward to getting them open as soon as is safely possible. We all know that our waterparks, theme parks and related incredible products get families and friends together, keep them together and not only put smiles on faces, but build great memories that last a lifetime and more. That's our job and as soon as it is safe to open, we're all going for it!"

And he continued: "For ProSlide, our mission is 100 per cent driven to build the world's best water rides for the world's waterparks, world's theme parks and world's resorts and we are right on that track. We went into this COVID-19 period with the strongest business momentum ever and we're in close touch with all of our great customer partners who are also all very entrepreneurial and driven go-getters. This combination of partners is looking beyond COVID-19 to continued innovation and products that best take care of and give our mutual guests safe and exciting environments that everyone needs and longs for."





In a message of support to friends and colleagues in the industry at this difficult time, Hunter concluded: "I would like to say that we should not forget that we are lucky to be in this family-fun industry and the families need us to keep working hard to deliver fun experiences in incredible environments. It's as much a mental health issue as anything, because we provide

products and services that truly put smiles on faces and help every individual for even a short time put hardship and despair aside. Society needs these experiences and it is what drives our industry. This virus will be over at some point and we all want to stay in motion with our businesses and accelerate out the other side of it! Stay positive!"

## **Sascha Czibulka, executive vice-president, Intamin**

Reflecting on the affect the COVID-19 crisis has had on Intamin to date and the actions the company is taking to minimise the impact of the global pandemic on the business, Sascha Czibulka commented: "As governments have made and still make significant interventions in response to the coronavirus and as those interventions have an immediate impact on our clients, namely the operators, also we are facing basically two levels of adjustment, which are driven internally and externally respectively. Internally, we have adjusted our processes, which includes communicating more regularly with employees, having adopted new health and safety procedures, cancelling events and halting business travel. Externally, we have to navigate the financial and operational challenges caused by the various government interventions."

And not surprisingly, he notes a very negative feedback from operators trying to deal with the crisis when discussing the impact on them.

"In short (the feedback) is very bad, as one can imagine, if you cannot generate any revenue while at the same time having to cope with the running costs. The situation for operators is tremendously challenging. As a consequence, some – and fortunately for us not too many – operators have asked us to help, be it by postponing or putting projects on hold and helping with payment plans. But as one can imagine, our abilities in this context are not unlimited as we also have to maintain our organisation and supply chain."

We also asked Czibulka if operators were concerned for suppliers and if they were worried that some may close if the situation continues for a long period?

"They definitely are," Czibulka says. "But for sure there are also some operators who currently only focus on their immediate survival and are simply not in the position to look at the mid and long term. This is understandable. And unfortunately we will see victims on both ends."

In relation to the postponement and/or cancellation of some of the main industry trade shows and other industry

events, at the time of writing Czibulka felt it was too early to determine exactly what the effect and impact of this would be.

"For sure, there will be a negative effect as trade shows and events are sales opportunities. And without those events and the operators, for understandable reasons, not necessarily being in a purchasing mood, we will have to deal with the consequences. The big question is the strength and duration of this situation and the impact it will have on our business.

"As already indicated, we have to differentiate between

the immediate and mid/long term impact," he continued.

"The operators are facing the immediate impact of not being able to open and operate, which will be followed by the impact of the 'new normal' once the parks are back to operation. This will result in a number of adaptations. We as a supplier have to obviously adapt too. Despite that we are

by far not as heavily impacted at this very moment, although we are expecting a reduced demand for a certain, hopefully not too long period of time. And we may also see a change in demand. But every crisis also comes with opportunities and we at Intamin are trying hard to identify those opportunities and act accordingly. With the help and input of our clients, we are very confident to overcome the impact this has taken on our industry."

And Czibulka concluded with this message of support for the wider industry: "Despite there being so much negativity out there, we want to encourage everyone to try to also see the positive aspects of this crisis, which admittedly in some cases is not easy at all. Most importantly we would like to thank our clients, our industry friends and our suppliers for their support and wish them all the best to overcome the current and future challenges together with us. We are in this together!"





**Una deBoer, director, global marketing and strategy, WhiteWater**

"We are all feeling the impact of COVID-19, both as individuals stuck working from our homes and seeing our customers delay openings of projects because of concerns that consumers won't be travelling to enjoy them," comments Whitewater's Una deBoer. "We are going to see a slow-down in confidence within the industry for a while and how quickly we bounce back is dependent on how well we respond now (communicating with employees and customers and keeping operations on track) and how

quickly consumer confidence returns. Anything that we can do as an industry to make consumers feel safe will help speed their return.

"It is important to remember that the world isn't all at the same stage of the pandemic," she continued. "In China, we see the public flocking back into parks and new projects are still under construction. At WhiteWater, we've been proactive in managing our supply chain to keep things on track and to stay in touch with customers by offering advice and support to help. Just a nice reminder that we are in this together. Although, unfortunately we aren't seeing each other at trade shows, technologies like Zoom and WhatsApp have rapidly helped fill the contact gap as we quickly transitioned into remote working.

"Like many other industries, we have to be nimble to respond and to this end, we've built on the Vantage Technology Ltd. platform, which helps entertainment venues improve guest experiences with location technology. Our Vantage offer now enables contact tracing so that parks can more easily comply with reduced capacity and density requirements for safe social distancing. Now is the time to offer practical solutions and support.

"As a company, we were quick to change our tone as the crisis unfolded and you've probably seen the unity advert that we've been running since March. We immediately recognised that, with parks closed and people sick, trying to sell our latest slide wasn't an appropriate response. We wanted our advertising to continue in order to support the trade publications we value and to show solidarity with our customers. The word unprecedented has become overused but that is because I don't think any of us expected this or were fully prepared for the global impact that it has caused.

And deBoer concluded: "Geoff Chutter has led WhiteWater for 40 years this year, for the last six years with his son Paul at his side. WhiteWater, like many others in our industry, is a family business and that means continuity and stability. Geoff sometimes reminds us that WhiteWater has navigated a few of these global downturns over the decades and while things contract for a period of time, they have always bounced back. I think that is the important thing to remember, that what we do is needed by people, as the isolation has shown us that we are social creatures. People will return to parks to play and splash and laugh again."



*Editor's note – Our grateful thanks to the above contributors for their valued input into this article. We wish everyone at all the manufacturers and suppliers serving the industry and all owners, operators and employees at parks and attractions around the world a healthy and safe time going forward as we seek to deal with and overcome this crisis.*



# Marketing strategies to engage customers and understand their expectations



By **Danny Gruening**, vice-president of marketing, Creative Works

ONE way or another, every business has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last few months, businesses have had to make difficult decisions and adjustments to cope with the constantly-evolving situation.

The worst days of COVID-19 seem to be (hopefully) behind us. This means entertainment businesses are entering preparation mode and plans are being made for theme parks and amusement facilities to open their doors once again.

One of the most difficult aspects of having your facility closed has been finding ways to engage with customers. How can you stay relevant to your customers and boost your brand during quarantine?

Additionally, no-one knows what customer expectations or behaviors will be once entertainment facilities are open again. The reality is that, across the world, every facility will be different. Some parks and facilities have already opened, while others might still be closed for many more months. How can you determine

the volume and frequency of guest visits? How can you figure out if they feel safe going to your facility? How do you know what their spending habits will be when they return?

Whether you're already open or still closed, this article is going to address all of the questions above by providing you with specific strategies and actions to help set your facility up for success in the coming months.

## How to engage customers on social media

A lot of businesses tend to struggle with social media. Even in the best of times, it can be difficult to know how to use the platforms to get people to care about what you're posting. And right now, you have a huge audience of customers (and potential customers) who are stuck at home and spending enormous amounts of time on social media.

Before we dive into some pandemic-specific social media strategies and how to capitalise on this captive audience,





let's first review some general practices for these platforms. Too often, businesses use social media purely as a way to sell. But that's a mistake.

Social media is supposed to be "social." Gary Vaynerchuk, a marketing expert who runs a large social media agency, has a book that explains a good method. It's called *Jab, Jab, Right Hook*. In his philosophy, a "jab" is a piece of content that's valuable for your followers – something funny, cute, entertaining, etc. And a "right hook" is an ask – a request to sign up for an email list, buy a special, book a game time, etc.

He recommends posting eight or nine jabs for every one right hook. This means you need to focus on giving value at least 80 per cent of the time before you try to sell something. This is especially true during a pandemic. You should not be focused on sales during this time. Fun and engaging will make it easier to bring them back in the door with a right hook when your venue reopens.

## Here are some real-world social media examples to keep customers engaged:

- Urban Air Adventure Park has been creating some "spot the difference" photos of their facilities. They post two photos side by side, state how many differences there are and then encourage people to comment on what they find. This gives families a fun momentary distraction and keeps Urban Air at the top of their mind.
- Urban Air Adventure Park has also been encouraging guests to make their own DIY warrior course. This is very on-brand for their company's mission and it helps keep the kids active, even when they are cooped up in the house. Their followers use household items to create a course and they upload pictures and videos to social media.
- At home activities. If your customers are still stuck at home, encourage families to create games and activities that will keep them and their children entertained. Jake's Unlimited has a series called #jakesathome where they encourage families to create home versions of their favourite arcade games and attractions. For each post, they have a link showing exactly how to build the game.
- Hold an "ask me anything" live stream on Facebook. Followers can get to know you on a more personal level and they can also ask questions about your facility's procedures or plans to reopen. Publicise this event on social media before it happens so that people can be ready with questions during the live stream. King Family Fun Centre in Puyallup, Washington, US, has been doing these live streams for several months, with great response from their followers.
- Keep your followers informed about your projected reopening date and your new cleaning and sanitising procedures. People want to be shown, not told. So post videos or pictures of you and your staff hard at work cleaning and sanitising everything. This will give guests peace of mind and makes them more likely to visit if they know they're safe.

These are just a few examples that can hopefully inspire you to create your own content that matches your brand, your voice and your mission.

**Use surveys to understand customer expectations and behaviour**

So, now that you know how to stay engaged with your customers, it's time to address the other question. How do you know what consumer expectations and behaviours will be upon returning to your facility? One way to address this is by conducting a survey. Surveys can help you understand if your customer will return, when they will return, where they will spend their money and a lot more.

Surveys sound difficult and troubling, right? No need to worry! We're going to break it all down.

SurveyMonkey and SurveyGizmo are two of many free or low-cost options to conduct simple surveys. Use your customers' email addresses that you've collected to send out the survey. You should expect that most customers won't complete the survey, but you're looking for a significant sample size to help you draw conclusions (in this case, probably at least 150-200 survey responses).

Your survey should have a specific and defined goal. Cementing a goal will help you craft your survey questions in a way that will gain you real and concrete data that you can use. For example, your goal might be to determine if

guests are comfortable hosting birthday parties at your facility in the coming months. You can ask questions about their level of comfort in hosting a party at your place and use open ended questions to gauge their main concerns. Then use this information to make adjustments to your operational processes and your marketing messages.

It would be smart to also include some sort of qualifying or persona-based question. For example, you might ask "What brought you to our facility for your last visit?" This will help you sort your survey response data based on the kind of customer they are.

If you're able to gather up enough responses, you should be able to draw some real conclusions that will help you determine actions, such as when to open, changes to make to your facility, what your customers expect from your facility and much more.

**Stay customer-focused**

We know you're itching to get back to making your customers and followers happy, but it's not an overnight process. By staying engaged with customers and getting a better understanding of their expectations, you will be prepared to provide a fun and safe environment for them to return to.







# The great balancing act: experience and returns

Image courtesy Liseberg

Shareholders want profit and a return on investment: visitors want memorable, exciting experiences. Delivering both is the challenge facing any successful attraction operator. Unhappy guests will inevitably lead to unhappy shareholders, but great operators find the balance between spending money where it counts and cutting costs where the visitor is not impacted. Here, Leisure Development Partners (LDP) reflects on the central balancing act within leisure and tourism – keeping quality standards in place (which will drive attendance and revenues) while containing costs. How can this be achieved?

THERE is a proven requirement for attractions to stay fresh and exciting to ensure repeat visits. But when is the time right to invest? And how far do you go with the refresh? Smart attraction operators do not wait for a tailing off in demand to instigate their next investment; they anticipate and strategise. Similarly, owners want to see solid profits, squeezing operators for every percentage point of EBITDA margin. Smart operators will analyse and interrogate their costs, they know where they can squeeze but also appreciate how much is too much, impacting the experience, ergo the visitor.

For the smartest operators, the starting point in any decision-making process is understanding your ultimate

potential. Understanding peer group data can point to what is achievable given your location, size and available markets. It has been observed across the industry that attractions, generally speaking, don't always gain from the benefits accurate benchmarking can bring. That is to say, attractions will often operate "in isolation," basing performance upon *their own* internal markers – what they spent on their last project versus the current one, last week's cost of sales versus this week's cost of sales and so on.

Why does this matter? As economists, accurate benchmarking is fundamental to our analysis, forecasting and outputs – we rely on good data to forecast future outcomes. It's hard to argue a stronger way attractions can truly understand their own performance without reference to industry comparisons, as is the routine with most other industries (think other real estate classes such as hotels, retail and commercial office space). Only through benchmarking across the industry can operators put their own performance in context and through this, really understand current performance and potential. This applies to all benchmarks, including market penetration, average length of stay, seasonality, spend per head and indeed operating costs. By benchmarking attractions can accurately see where they sit both in terms of where costs could or should be contained or perhaps even expanded. Yet still so many attractions operate in isolation without making comparison with their peers.

There are three key cost areas that need constant scrutiny – initial capital expenditure, operating expenses and of course reinvestment. We look at each in turn.

### Capital expenditure

Theme parks and visitor attractions are very capital intensive. The aim, always, is to balance investment with the market opportunity. This involves a careful calibration throughout the feasibility and planning process to address not just how much to invest but what does that investment deliver in terms of revenues, operating profit and returns? Solid feasibility work at an early stage will focus the team's efforts not just on how much to invest but *what to actually invest in*. The ultimate goal for most leisure businesses is of course to optimise capex and the profit it generates, to maximise returns.

What is the programme that optimises capital – whatever the dream that could be achieved, there is nothing more crucial than having a watertight investment appraisal process. Whoever the investor, there will be a maximum budget. It will be imperative to assess a broad range of investment options and assess the impact of each. Part of this is return, part is visitor experience and the fit with the wider aspirations of the developer/investor, but this has to be combined with planning and an analytical investment appraisal process.

Take investment per attendee at a theme park as an example. This is the go-to benchmark for what to invest in a new project. From the now somewhat outdated rule of thumb of US\$100 a head, we now see projects ranging from \$150 to \$400/\$500 and in some of the more ambitious projects planned, for example in the Middle East, this could be far higher.

Given this range, being able to make a clear judgement about what level of investment is appropriate to maximise returns is crucial. At the top end, at world-renowned parks, this level of investment can equal new ride categories, new IP and heavy, ultra-immersive theming. As long as this is balanced with increased perceived value, stronger retail spend and sufficiently improved profit, there is a business case. This takes data, analysis and strategic thinking to ascertain.

Yet there are emerging markets, for example in Eastern Europe or Latin America, that don't have theme park visitors with the kind of spending power we see in the mature markets such as the US; they are perhaps 15 years behind that investment per attendee curve. In such regions, developers must be careful to understand and implement a

strict "spend balance." For consumers that have not ridden the latest launch coaster or the most immersive dark ride, expectations can be met and surpassed without delivering the most up-to-date, hi tech attractions. Perhaps installing a coaster that would have been cutting edge 15 years ago in mature markets but would still represent absolute best in class could be the best way forward.

Theming and story driven content is expensive – it can often account for between a quarter and a third of the capital budget. While it can drive great spend it also drives up project costs. In these cases, getting the very best from great theming is key. The best master planners in the industry don't only work on the flashiest projects – they know how to use theming sparingly to get the most impact, rather than having to theme absolutely all surfaces. If the budget is a challenge, it's important to make sure every dollar/euro works and the expenditure goes where the guest notices. Whatever your size and catchment, your cap ex should work hard to increase market penetration, length of stay and visitor spend.

While attractions tend to be capital intensive, one way to reduce the burden on developers and/or investors is to share that burden with the public sector. Attractions, particularly larger attractions such as theme parks, have huge and ongoing economic impacts. In particular attractions generate lots of jobs but can also drive significant tourism impacts. LDP advises strongly to have an economic impact assessment completed that thoroughly demonstrates these impacts to local, regional or national governments who may then be compelled to support the project, be it by direct cash inputs, free or low cost land, soft loans or by providing infrastructure.

Image courtesy  
Bellewaerde





## Reinvestment

Reinvestment has to be considered as critical for the ongoing success of all attractions. Many theme parks are quite casual in the reinvestment process, something we would always advise against. Sometimes it can seem like “we have a budget, let’s go to a trade show and buy a ride.” This process needs to be far more rigorous (as it of course is for some). It is important to reinvest just to stand still in terms of attendance. There is no guarantee that reinvestment equals growth, but with some certainty, low levels of reinvestment will most likely lead to a drop in attendance. It’s imperative to think through a range of options and develop a business case for each with a view on how it will affect the bottom line in the long run. Will it have impact on length of stay? Incremental benefit on food and beverage sales? Does it address an audience segment for whom you lack capacity?

Our data shows that if there is no reinvestment, future attendance will almost always decline, particularly in resident orientated markets. With reinvestment between eight to 10 per cent of gross revenues, attendance levels should be maintained all things being equal in terms of markets and competition.

## Operating expenses

Tracking and benchmarking operating costs should of course be one of the core functions of the finance department for any park or attraction. Close monitoring of costs of sale such as retail, photography and F&B is critical. Of equal importance is the study of operating expense key performance indicators, such as your staff costs and marketing cost per visitor, which will help inform your decisions around where spends have room for cuts. On the flip side, do benchmarks suggest you are underspending to the detriment of the business? Sometimes we find with existing businesses that marketing is not up to the level one might expect compared to benchmark norms, for instance. Investing as much as 10 per cent of revenues in marketing can feel burdensome, but as budgets slide, we often witness market penetration following suit.

On staffing, costs here vary massively depending on local salaries and employment norms and regulations. As an average across Europe, say, they might account for a quarter or more of revenues whereas in emerging markets they might be lower. Looking to contain a cost that is a quarter or more of your entire revenue is a priority. But there is a limit as to what you can do. One must deliver customer

Image courtesy  
Adventure World  
Australia





Image courtesy  
Busch Gardens  
Tampa Bay

service and safety and “show,” all of which require solid staff and training. So it’s important to hone and optimise this cost but this should be done in tandem with monitoring customer satisfaction and benchmarked against other staff related KPIs such as attendees per full time equivalent staff member, staff costs as a percentage of total operating expenses or as a percentage of revenues. Only by looking at the complete picture regularly and in relation to the peer group are strengths and weaknesses illuminated.

Looking at F&B, we all know that the consumer is increasingly interested in the provenance of their lunch tray; the cheapest burger is not the best burger. Parks that we benchmark have improved margins in this area and for the most part they haven’t achieved this through slashing their cost of sales (i.e. by buying cheaper ingredients). They have achieved it through making more welcoming food environments, bringing restaurants into the “park story” and taking great pride in the food delivered. The evidence is that improvements to the quality of offer – spending more on better coffee is a good example – has improved people’s willingness to purchase. So there is a correlation between F&B environment and price point. It is absolutely true that visitors are becoming more discerning about their F&B purchases and not tolerating poor quality and moreover may be willing to spend more for a better experience.

As an operator, the goal should be to deliver the quality level that maximises the business (*your business*, not the household name park with 10 times the visitor numbers with an entirely different catchment). It is important to seek to deliver the quality offer that maximises your

business case. Remember, return on investment (ROI) is not simply about reducing costs and containing the investment expenditure. We see time and again, the most successful project is the one that delivers on the broader goals of the owner while also delivering the highest ROI.

Maintain your critical eye – visitors notice when things slide and need a lick of paint, they notice litter and things that impact their impression of the park. In our experience, these details can and do impact a visit almost as much as the bigger failings such as a closed ride.

The ownership structure of some parks puts enormous pressure on operators to drive incremental improvements in EBITDA margin. Some parks are expected to operate into the 40 per cent plus EBITDA margin territory, which 15 years ago would have been unthinkable except for in regions where there are extremely low staff costs. Some are able to achieve these margins through the economies of scale and scope (i.e. being part of very large groups) but these are not the correct benchmarks for smaller operators and may not even be sustainable for big players. The owner community should take stock and reflect on the fact that unsustainable high margins inevitably lead to shabbiness and not the quality experience the client is looking for.

### **About Leisure Development Partners**

*Leisure Development Partners (LDP) is a leading consulting practice focused on the economics of visitor attractions, leisure and entertainment real estate. They assess the feasibility of new attractions and assist existing businesses on improvement strategies and long term planning.*





Image Courtesy  
Wild Adventures  
Theme Park, US

# Guest service is more important now than ever before

As I write this article, and most-likely by the time it goes to print, the world is in the midst of lockdowns, quarantines and isolations as we together play a part in stopping the spread of coronavirus.

For those who don't know, I live in Australia. But what's most interesting is how comprehensive the global coverage of the pandemic has been; it feels like I'm more aware of world news than I have ever been before. In terms of the attractions industry, many who read this are currently working differently, or possibly hibernating while this situation passes.

Every issue, I write about customer service and what is interesting is that when I think about the world currently, customer service has become more relevant than ever before. Attractions that have a culture of exceptional service have been subconsciously planning for this pandemic for years. Those organisations that don't give the due focus to service are caught off guard. In a time of social distancing, we've realised how important it is to be connected with one another. And in a time where we stay at home and have more online deliveries than before, we're still expecting to receive exceptional service in whatever form.

During this exceptional period there are constant examples of organisations that have stepped-up to be of service to their customers and organisations that haven't. Too many are local and would not all fit into this article, but the key message from this is that during these times, customers will be more critical than ever before, yet, they

will be very understanding at the same time. Organisations that are trying their hardest to do what they can to help will be applauded, while organisations that disown their customers will be criticised.

Aside from this view there are a few other customer service trends that every organisation should take note of as they will be more relevant than ever before once this is over.

## 1. Customers are affected differently

You would have likely heard the saying that has become somewhat cliché lately "we're all in this together." This maybe true, but at the same time, it doesn't mean people are affected in the same way – some are worse off than others. Even when dealing with a pandemic, some of your customers won't be concerned at all, some take it too lightly, while some take it very seriously.

As everyone is different this highlights the need to be more empathetic than ever before. It's so easy to snap at a difficult customer and say things like "We're all feeling the same way too!" or "You're not the only one affected!?" The global pandemic should not be used as an umbrella to group everyone's feelings and emotions under. People are still individuals and need to be treated empathetically.

## 2. Efficiency is a priority

Efficiency is always a priority, but during these times it has certainly gained a deeper meaning. Usually when you ask someone about efficiency, they say it's about doing things



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Abu Dhabi

quickly – which is not always the case. My definition of efficiency is a combination and balance between speed, ease, accuracy and reliability (acronym SEAR). Things done too quickly but not accurately are not efficient. Things made really easy but which can't be replicated reliably over a period of time aren't efficient.

Take messaging from governments as an example. The coronavirus situation is unfolding at a rapid rate in an uncharted way. Governments get messaging out quickly, they make it easy to understand (now isn't the time for being confused), they do what they can do to ensure information is factual and reliable and they want to convey trust so that the public will listen. This is now a must for all customers.

### 3. Customers miss each other

There's no doubt been a huge trend towards online retailing away from the traditional face-to-face, but that doesn't mean that customers like it better. Humans are social beings and long for interaction. Some countries are currently talking about easing restrictions and the public pressure from others is enormous to get back to normal. When that time comes, organisations will embrace customer interactions more.

But depending on how long this goes on for, interactions are still relevant now. Social distancing means people are shopping quicker than ever before while keeping physical distances away from one another, but that doesn't mean that interactions shouldn't take place. For many who are staying indoors, sometimes going to the shops is the only thing they will do all week, so just keep this in mind when people are out and about again.

### 4. Greater focus on the physical elements of service

What's really impressive is that within a week of coronavirus restrictions taking place, organisations (mainly supermarkets and takeaway cafés) adapted really well by creating modified queue layouts, markers on the ground and checkpoints as people enter a store.

Firstly it's impressive that they have done this so quickly (and there's another lesson in there which we will discuss shortly). But most importantly, it is really interesting to observe how customers have all adapted to this. Believe it or not, one of the things that often frustrates customers is actually other customers themselves. Theme parks and attractions are no different. While crowds create great atmospheres they can also be rather off-putting too. The way the physical environment has adapted for customers has given them their own space without a feeling of being pushed or shoved.

### 5. Deal with repetition better

I get it. Team members often feel that they are like a broken record player, saying the same things to customers over and over again. I'm not 100 per cent sure about all other countries, but here in Australia, panic buying in the initial days of the pandemic saw huge stock depletions of hand sanitiser, toilet paper and pasta. It took many weeks for the supply to return to normal. However, in the meantime, supermarkets were faced with customers coming in to ask "Do you have any toilet paper" (100 times a day)!!! When team members are asked the same question continuously it's very easy to lapse into a poor service response. Rather than being frustrated, team members should have more patience in answering the same question continuously.

In addition to these, there are a few more trends on my list which I will save for the next edition of *InterPark*. In the meantime, I wish you all the very best and that you remain safe and healthy.

*Chris Smoje is a customer service speaker, trainer, facilitator and founder of the DIME™ Customer Service approach. Chris works with organisations and their people to develop a common interest and excitement about delivering exceptional customer service results.*

[www.dimecustomerservice.com](http://www.dimecustomerservice.com)

# Open to Question

## Ryan Stana



Ryan Stana,  
CEO and Founder,  
RWS Entertainment  
Group

**InterPark:** Can you provide a brief outline of your time in the attractions industry?

**Ryan Stana:** 17 years ago I started RWS with a drive to change the world of entertainment in the theme park industry and we have done just that and more. My drive started as a child watching theme park shows and as a performer in theme parks – I knew my vision could innovate the industry. Over these past 17 years, I have grown this company from a show company to a turnkey experiential solution for the industry. We now provide it all – from master planning to design, fabrication, installation, operations, strike and even storage.

**IP:** What is the history of RWS Entertainment Group? When was it founded?

**RS:** RWS Entertainment Group was founded in 2003. Our goal with RWS was to disrupt the industry by providing the foremost turnkey solution to custom entertainment and we feel we have really achieved that.

Today, we operate out of a 56,000sq.ft office, rehearsal studio complex and performer housing premises in New York City. Our New York HQ hosts rehearsal studios, sound studios, casting suites, design lab, costume shop and more. This enables us to provide full design and installation services for interactive experiences, theming, décor and more, to create truly immersive, Instagrammable experiences, all under one roof for clients.

Our work at RWS is global. RWS currently entertains nearly 300 million people a year around the globe

and produces over 400 experiences yearly. We work with leading brands, cruise lines, theme parks and organisations from around the world and most recently we launched our European headquarters in London.

**IP:** What are the company's key products and services?

**RS:** Our offering covers all the bases. Our services range from conceptualisation, casting, design, fabrication, installation, operations, strike and storage. No matter what the brief, we provide clients with a seamless, "one-stop-shop" experience, producing extraordinary award-winning experiences all under one roof.

The experiences we produce include theatrical entertainment, branded experiences, live events and attraction design, but we don't stop there. With studios located across the globe, we have the ability to fabricate and execute.

**IP:** What type of venues does the company work with?

**RS:** On land and at sea, RWS produces over 400 turnkey live experiences a year, equaling over 4.5 million square meters or 50 Buckingham Palaces! RWS' services are primarily sought out by the hospitality, leisure and attractions, municipality, theatrical, corporate and branded property industries. However, RWS connects people through engaging story-telling techniques and have also raised the experience outside of these industries, for example in hospitals.



# Open to Question



**IP:** What do you feel makes RWS stand out from other suppliers of similar services and solutions? What are the company's USPs?

**RS:** Headquartered out of New York City, with a creative studio in London, RWS has an international outreach. Our 100, international, city-wide audition tour, coupled with our various warehouse locations allows us to have more global access than anyone. We are a worldwide, turnkey approach.

Besides our turnkey approach and cutting-edge technology, I think the human touch and character we bring to our projects is what makes us truly unique. At RWS, we hire a team of over 4,500 artists, performers, technicians and creatives that work tirelessly to bring our experiences to life. The talent that we have amassed over the years is quite exceptional and being able to collaborate with some of the best creatives in the industry when creating our experiences is definitely a unique selling point for us.

We are also connectors to iconic and legacy brands and are able to offer our clients the ability to partner with these brands. For one check, our clients can secure us to do the licensing deal with a brand in addition to produce, execute and manage the full programme. We also offer a unique custom-designed package for clients, regardless of size and budget. We allow our clients, and any brand partners, to view the product in advance of onsite install or opening through a unique workshop process, which allows for all stakeholders to view an actualised version of the show or programme – offering the opportunity for

final approvals in advance of installation, where we are typically up against time constraints.

With the current world circumstances, we are continuing with our efforts to stay connected to the creative community. This has encouraged us to diversify the services and experiences we offer. For example, we are now focusing on online coaching, Q&As and training for our performers, technicians and team, in order to keep their creativity alight so that they are prepared for a triumphant return once the world goes back to normal.

**IP:** Can you outline two or three of the company's most recently completed productions or some you are currently working on?

**RS:** We have worked with Europa-Park on several projects throughout the years, including their Junior Club, where we created an interactive show with Ed and Edda. Visitors of all ages are asked to take part in a music video with Ed and Edda, allowing you to sing and dance along with your favourite Europa-Park characters. Our immersive experience elevated Ed and Edda as icons of the Europa-Park brand and this character programme is now supported by various meet and greets throughout the park and a full merchandise experience.

Coupled with a \$20m property renovation, Westfield wanted to make sure the Christmas holiday's created a WOW and it did just that. RWS created key iconic moments throughout the property, that included sweeping animated lights, oversized holiday themed play spaces, stunning trees and a Santa visit that truly

brings the tradition of the holidays right into your heart. The combination of modern and traditional allowed RWS to put the WOW in the Westfield holiday experience, creating icons that have become a Santa snap for Instagram!

RWS has also worked on some spectacular projects for cruise lines, such as the Step One Dance Company with Holland America Line. With Holland America Line, we conceived and designed show product for the first theatre in the round at sea, which included floor projection and advanced video and lighting effects. We also collaborated with Holland America Line to bring to life the brands of Oprah, Lincoln Centre for the Performing Arts, *Billboard Magazine* and *Rolling Stone Magazine*. These immersive experiences allowed us to create engaging entertainment experiences, increase guest stays and drive incremental revenue.

**IP:** Where do you start with a project/production and are the ideas you come up with usually inspired by requests from/the needs of individual clients or do you more often provide the 'production solution' yourselves?

**RS:** The involvement of each client varies from being incredibly hands-on with input on every aspect of design to having little-to-no input from conceptualisation to realisation onstage. We leave it up to the needs and expertise of the team that is hiring us as to what aspects they feel are important for them to weigh in on.

As we take the time to get to know our client's mission and goals – in addition to the unique demographic at each venue – we are able to customise a package that is highly effective. Clients trust the process and look forward to the end result. From the initial idea to the costume and scenic designs and song selections to talent hiring and managing, we are able to build and tailor our offerings directly for the client's needs.

**IP:** How important is live entertainment in the overall entertainment mix in a theme park and why?

**RS:** As the popularity of gaming and television becomes a staple in the home, the goal of an event and bringing people together will become even more important. As we begin to look at the design of an event, people desire to be immersed in an environment

– they do not want to be spectators, they want to be part of it. We are excited to be at the forefront of developing these sought-out experiences, combining the elements of live entertainment and immersion, creating a whole new attraction for the industry.

**IP:** What changes and/or trends are you seeing in the live entertainment requirement of parks and attractions globally at the present time?

**RS:** Today, more than ever the live entertainment industry will need to re-invent itself and we are ready to do just that. As we continue to change the way people will interact with live entertainment, we must remember that authenticity is the key to creating a compelling entertainment experience.

We must also remember the importance of live entertainment as we will need to fill the void of guests waiting in a line or many people experiencing an attraction all at once. Guests are going to need to be entertained throughout the day more than usual; therefore, we must create more moments of surprise and delight through performance during each touch point of the experience.

## Personally speaking

**Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at ...** household organisation

**The most interesting place I've ever been to is ...** The Grand Canyon...it took my breath away

**Family aside, the prized possession I value above all others is ...** my dog, Penelope

**My favourite film is ...** *Parasite*

**When I'm not working, I like to ...** spend time with friends

**The person who has influenced me most is ...** my grandmother

**My favourite musician/band is ...** The Eagles

**If I could invite a celebrity to dinner it would be ...** Michelle Obama

**My unfulfilled ambition is ...** running the NYC Marathon

**I really dislike ...** voicemail messages



# Enchanted Kingdom, Philippines

PARKLIFE



ENCHANTED Kingdom (EK) was formally incorporated in 1992, conceptualised and planned for from 1992 to 94, broke ground in August 1994 and officially opened on October 19, 1995. The park was founded and funded by a group of businessmen/friends led by Cesar Mario O. Mamon and his brother-in-law Rafelito E. Minguez, who initially served as its chairman of the board and president and CEO respectively. From 1999 onwards, Mario Mamon has served in a concurrent capacity as the park's chairman, president and CEO.

**Mario O. Mamon and his wife Cynthia**



Enchanted Kingdom initially opened as a themed amusement park divided into seven themed zones. These were Victoria Park, with the grand entrance and a Chance 60-seat Grand Carousel; Boulderville, featuring a Chance bi-plane ride called Air Pterodactyl, a Morgan tea cup ride called Bumbling Boulders, a soft play area called Rock Quarry and an open-air playground called Petreefied Treehouse; Midway Boardwalk with I.E. Park bumper cars called the Dodgems, a Morgan balloon

ride called Up, Up and Away, a Huss Condor, a Vekoma Junior Coaster called Roller Skater, an Intamin Swinging Ship called Anchors Away, J&J Amusement Bumper Boats called Bump 'n Splash, a Bakker 45m wheel called Wheel of Fate and a redemption games and video games building.

Other themed areas were Jungle Outpost with an OD Hopkins flume ride called Jungle Log Jam and swan paddle boats called Swan Lake; Space Port, featuring the park's signature roller coaster, a Vekoma boomerang called Space Shuttle, and a Schwarzkopf Enterprise ride; Brooklyn Place, with a 60-seat Omni Motion Master ride theatre called Rialto; and Portabello, which offered a Zierer Wave Swinger called Flying Fiesta and an educational play area.

Aside from these rides and attractions, there were also various food and merchandise outlets and carts all around the park, such the Bandstand fast food area and Amazon Grill and Launch Time restaurants situated between the Jungle Outpost and Space Port Zones. Other food outlets included Feltman's in Midway Boardwalk, Soda Fountain in Brooklyn Place and Parkside Sweets in Victoria Park. Retail and merchandise included Harry Houdini's Magic Shop, the Jungle Outpost Trading Post, the Space Shop and the Emporium.

At the time of opening, the park's total land area was approximately 11 hectares, of which around 10 was developed. The total land area increased to almost 16 hectares from 1996 to 2009, of which around 12 was developed. Because of the turnaround and growth of the business from 2009 onwards, Enchanted Kingdom has been able to increase its current total area to about 30 hectares, of which approximately 15 hectares is developed.

On completion of its further land acquisition, the business will have an aggregate of around 36 hectares to redevelop and expand into, with a plan to transform the stand-alone theme park into a multi-day, integrated attractions destination.

Over the years of course, many more rides and attractions have been added to the Enchanted Kingdom portfolio. These have included an OD Hopkins River Raft Ride called Rio Grande Rapids, a Hi Technology/Fantawild 4D Theatre, a 600sq.m events tent in the Space Port area called Eldar's Theatre (which replaced the Enterprise ride), a home grown Walk-Thru Horror Attraction called Shake, Rattle and Roll in co-operation with a prominent local movie production

outfit/media network, a Larson/ARM Drop Tower called Extreme Tower (which replaced the Condor) and a new zone called the Cultural Area which saw the debut of a 1,600sq.m events tent called Enchanting Events Place, which has since been expanded to 2,000sq.m.

Additionally, there is a Zamperla Mega Disk 'O called Disk-O-Magic, a Triotech 7D Theatre (a replacement for the Hi Technology/Fantawild 4D), a Zamperla six arm Air Race, a SIMEX/Iwerks 104-seat 4D Theatre (which replaced the Omni Motion Master) and a SIMEX/Iwerks 105-seat Flying Theatre called Agila: The EKsperience.

For its 25<sup>th</sup>. anniversary this year, Enchanted Kingdom had plans for a "very grand" celebration, with a number of new rides, attractions and features, but sadly the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled these new projects.

"We were going to introduce a new ride attraction (Mack Rides Spinning Coaster), expand and enhance our events venue and introduce a new building at Space Port (Building 25) with a novel interactive trampoline attraction and an enhanced Funovation Laser Mission attraction with





# PARKLIFE

Beam Buster, in addition to rental function rooms available for special events and parties,” Mamon told *InterPark*.

“We were also supposed to have a large summer concert with international talents in May and another one during our anniversary celebrations on October 15. As it stands now, all of the above are in limbo. The ride attractions and expansion are still hopefully on track for this year but had to be pushed back, either towards the last quarter of the year or at the latest, the first quarter of next year. We simply have no choice because the current situation prevents business from resuming and continuing as it should.”

Aside from its rides and attractions, Enchanted Kingdom prides itself on offering a variety of home-grown original shows and performances. Among the larger of these are a nightly pyrotechnic exhibition to the tune of the park’s

theme song on weekends and holidays. This has been held since the park first opened, while annual pyrotechnics competitions have also taken place during the park’s anniversary in October of each year.

Also on offer is the EK Story Musicale featuring Eldar the Wizard and the park’s signature twin princesses, Victoria and Madeline. This provides a song and dance ensemble that takes place during weekends at Eldar’s Theatre and is the story of how Enchanted Kingdom came into being.

A Chinese themed musical show is held during the first quarter of the year to celebrate Chinese New Year, while during the lean months of June to August, a Filipino themed musical show is held based on the lives of local folklore and heroes. Philippine independence is celebrated every June 12.





During the park's anniversary month of October, as well as the pyrotechnics competition, concerts and performances from popular local talents are held, while the EK Story Musicales takes on a holiday flavour for the Christmas season during December. Additionally, aside from these and other shows, several groups of entertainers perform atmospheric zone entertainment during the day, such as dances, magic acts, juggling and more.

The mix of F&B facilities inside the park is extensive and includes carts, kiosks, a food court and sit-down, full-service restaurants that are either company owned or leased out to partner tenants.

The park is open throughout the year, for approximately 250 days in total, with operating days/periods depending

on the time of year. For example, during the "lean" months of June to August, it is open only from Fridays to Sundays.

"Based on the market demand during certain times of the year, we can be flexible and open and/or adjust schedules as needed," says Mamon.

Over the past five years, the park has averaged annual attendances of around 1.5m to 1.8m visitors per year, with 2019 being the best at almost 1.9m. It was hoping to reach 2m this year had the current global situation not occurred. 95 per cent of guests are domestic or from the Philippines, with most of them coming from a catchment area of around 15 million to 20 million people within a radius of 50 kilometres and a traveling time of one to two hours. The park caters mainly to young teens through to the middle-aged market, or the 16 to 49-years-old age bracket. With the Philippines generally having a young population, it is seeing more and younger families at the park and also those who bring older generations. EK also caters to a large "edutainment" market from primary to secondary and even to tertiary levels.



## At a glance

Opened in 1995

Initially had 7 themed areas

Currently covers approximately 15 hectares

Open throughout the year for around 250 days in total

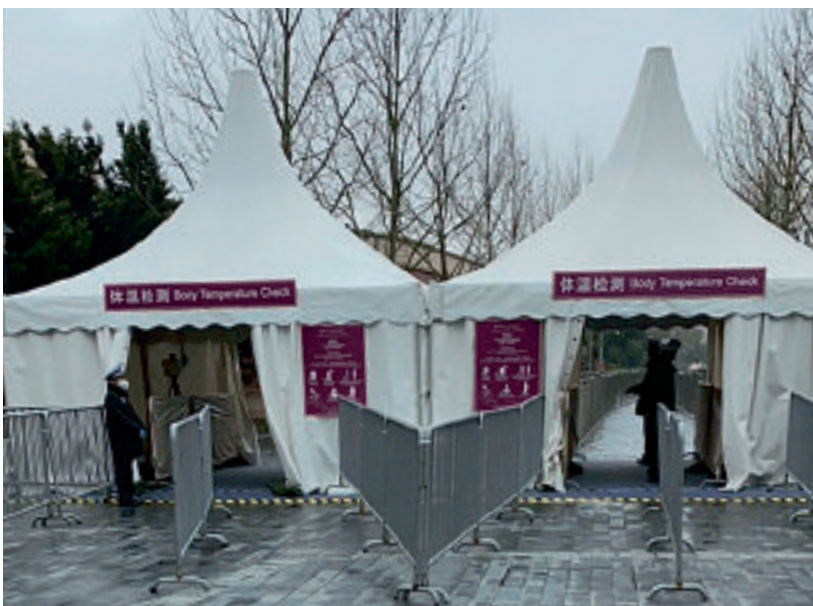
Numerous live entertainment offerings

Almost 1.9m visitors in 2019

Full-time staff of around 650; almost 1,000 employees during peak season

[www.enchantedkingdom.ph](http://www.enchantedkingdom.ph)





Shanghai Disney tents with temperature checks. Image courtesy *Orlando Weekly*

# Literally, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger!

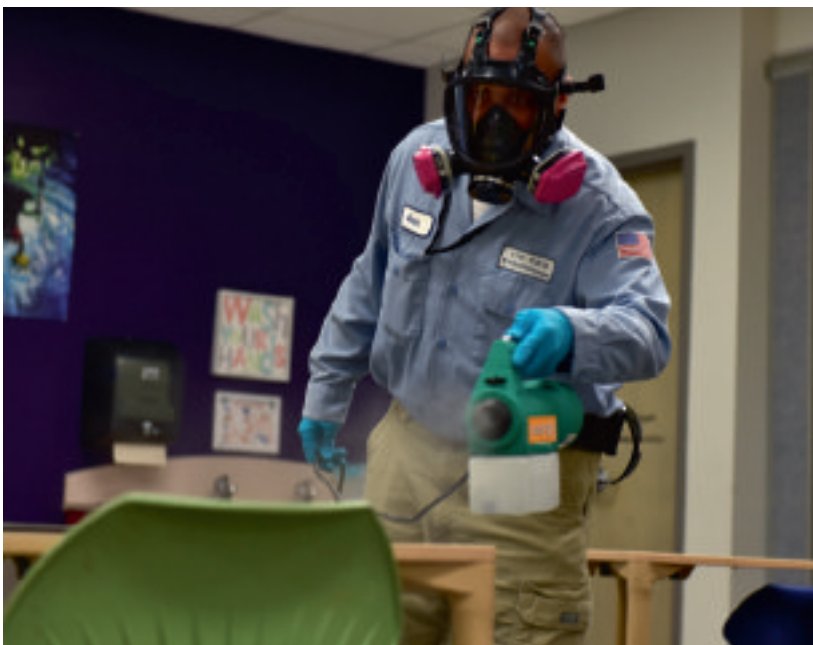
By Dennis Spiegel

Continuing his series of articles on the attractions industry, International Theme Park Services (ITPS) founder and CEO Dennis Spiegel discusses how attendances at parks and attractions will be impacted as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the operational actions venues will have to take to ensure safe visits for guests, and employees, in the future

I BEGAN writing my first articles on the coronavirus three months ago. It became quite apparent to me that the virus was on a course to collide with spring and Easter breaks in the USA and around the globe. I went on record on this timing schedule in early January 2020. It seems like years ago.

Now looking forward, it is apparent that the coronavirus has yet to reach its global zenith. Yes, there are areas that are experiencing slowdowns in cases and deaths, but there are also geographical areas that are still exposed to serious situations, such as Brazil where the spread of the virus at the time of this writing is rampant.

Image courtesy Aire Education and Training Command



What is going on? At this point in the calendar year (writing in mid-May), none of the major operators have planted a stake in the ground definitely announcing park opening dates. There have been a few independent parks which have declared a few dates in late May and early June, but the major operators have not declared.

What's going to happen? Operators need to test the waters with the new operating logistics that are being planned to be put in place at the parks. This includes temperature taking, distancing, spacing, disinfecting, wipe downs, thermal imaging, contactless POS systems and the implementation of hundreds of sanitisation locations, not to mention the severe attendance cutbacks at the front gate – as much as 50 per cent in reduction.

Based on early reports, it is safe to expect that attendance guidelines for parks are going to be initially reduced by 50 per cent to 70 per cent of normal throughput. This percentage has been discussed by many of the states here in America and by provinces in many other countries. The huge curtailment of foot traffic at the front gate will make it difficult to obtain the attendance, per capita, and revenue projections estimated by park operators for their 2020 season.

Today, as I write, an analyst who watches Disney has said that it is possible Disney's theme park/resort revenue loss through 2021 could reach US\$21 billion! As of this writing, parks are in a quandary as to what the economic impact is going to be in 2020 and the carry over into 2021 and beyond.

The parks, as stated above, need to start testing the operating logistical changes ASAP. I believe that the regional operators will not open all of their parks at once, rather choosing parks that geographically make the most sense to open. These would be parks that are not located in the "hot spot" areas.

For example, I do not believe that Six Flags will open their coastal parks, New Jersey/New York or Los Angeles parks as quickly as they will the USA interior parks – those with less population. Nevertheless, they will try to open, not only to test the logistics, but to get a read from the public on their reaction to the systematic changes that parks are going to be mandated to instigate due to COVID-19. Are people going to return as quickly as hoped?

Every aspect of our business is going to change. We are going to have to adapt design, operations, maintenance, marketing/advertising, finance and all aspects of our planning cycles. Most every part of our business is going to change, some short term and some for the long term. One thing for sure is we will have the guest in mind at every juncture of this new planning process.

Our collective goal globally will be to assure our guests that their visit will be safe, secure, and sanitary. The guests' wants, needs and desires will be met and exceeded even in these challenging times. When our industry puts its collective mind to the issue at hand, we always rise to the occasion, exceeding our own goals. This will hold true for how we tackle the coronavirus and position our industry for the future. Change is good. It causes us to be creative and ultimately stronger. Truer words were never spoken – "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger."

The coronavirus will ultimately disappear. Our creativity and innovations to meet this opponent head on will be with us and guide us now and in the future.

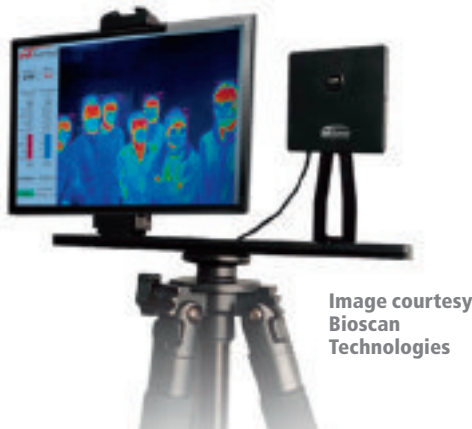


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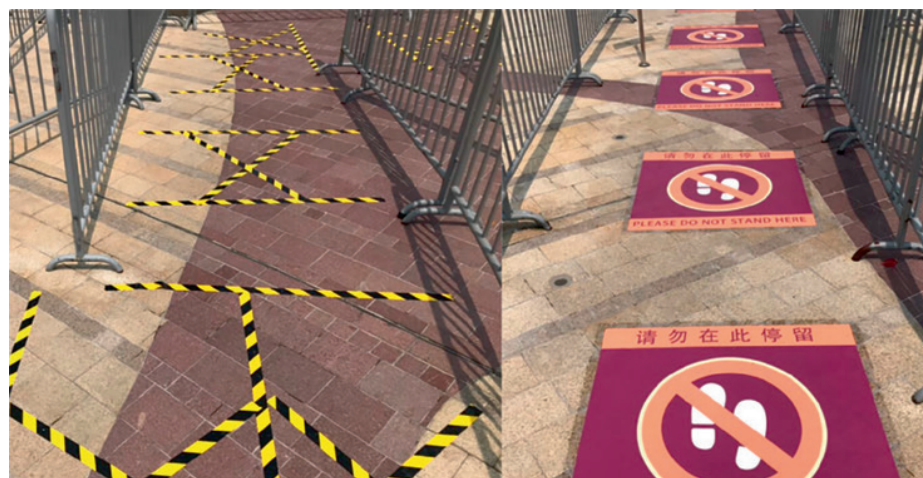


Image courtesy WDWNT LLC

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# OCCC's South and West halls to host IAAPA Expo 2020



THE Orange County Convention Centre (OCCC) in Orlando, Florida, will once again host the IAAPA Expo later this year, from November 17 to 20.

At the time of writing it was still unknown as to how the many issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic will impact on the expo, with many industry trade shows and other events having been postponed or cancelled so far in 2020. But assuming it will go ahead as normal, the event is once again set to provide attendees with another fine industry showcase unlike any other.

IAAPA Expo always attracts over 1,000 companies to the exhibit floor from over 100 countries, bringing a vast assortment of products and services for attendees to view, discuss and try out. This year, due to construction works taking place within the North halls of the OCCC, the show will be split into two, with the South and West halls accommodating participants. This will mean shuttle buses will be in play to move visitors from one hall to the other, the West hall being on the other side of International Drive from the halls attendees are more familiar with (and where the show used to be held many years ago).

According to IAAPA, the additional space at the expo "means there will be more education programmes, more lounges and network bars and more options for food and beverage," while the aforementioned shuttle buses will be carrying out a continuous loop between the buildings.

The new layout has also led to the creation of a number of different "pavilions" on the show floors which will group together companies supplying specific products and services more than ever before. Among these areas will be Rides and Equipment, Waterpark, Family Entertainment, Food and Beverage, Games and Arcade (formally Coin-Op), Inflatables, Merchandise, Show Production and Design, Operational Services and First-Time Exhibitors.

As always, running alongside all the activity on the exhibit floors will be a comprehensive education programme featuring seminar sessions and round table opportunities on a host of topics, while networking events, receptions, educational facility tours, the popular KickOff event, the GM and Owners' Breakfast and more will all add further to another busy and enjoyable week for attendees.

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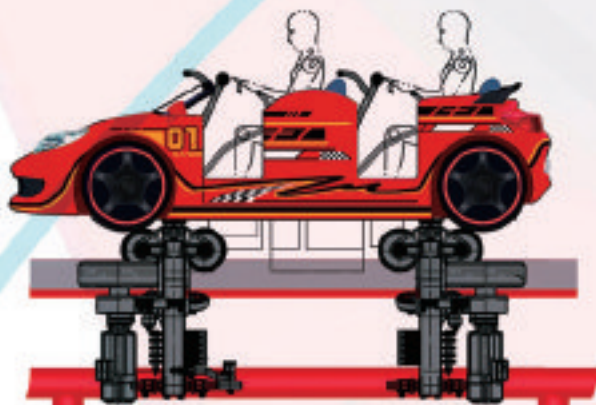
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